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THE MORAL TEACHING

OF THE

NEW TESTAMENT.

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THE

MORAL TEACHING

OF THE

NEW TESTAMENT

Viewed as evidential to its Historical Truth.

BY THE

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THE

MORAL TEACHING

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CHAPTER I.

THE STATEMENT OF THE ARGUMENT.

THERE are two lines of proof by which Christianity may be shown to be a divine revelation, the historical and the moral. The first of these assigns the most prominent position to a body of external evidence, which is adduced for the purpose of proving the genuineness and authenticity of the writings in which it has been communicated, and of the miracles by which it has been attested. By demonstrating the truth of these, it endeavours to ascend to Him to whom writings and miracles alike point—

the divine person of Christ our Lord. But the moral proof presents us at once with the person and teaching of Jesus Christ, as the evidence of His mission. Through it, it addresses its appeals at the same time both to the understanding, and to the moral and spiritual nature of man, his reason, his conscience, and his affections. In this proof the moral and spiritual occupy the foreground; the historical and the miraculous the secondary place. It begins with Christ. Through His person and teaching it advances to the divine character of the book which contains them, and supplements the whole by the historical proof.

This mode of reasoning has one advantage over the historical method. It is as strong now, probably stronger, than it was in the second century. The historical proof has been weakened by the loss of a great mass of Christian literature, and of the works of its earliest opponents. It also requires a large acquaintance with history and a considerable amount of critical judgment for its full appreciation. The moral requires only familiarity with the New Testament, and the exercise of sound judgment to arrive at the conclusion that Christianity is divine. The historical proof has been chiefly employed by the

defenders of Christianity in their controversies with modern unbelievers. The moral one was that on which the writers of the three first centuries chiefly relied. It was that which greatly contributed to the multiplication of the Church from the five hundred primitive believers to the many millions which rendered her the dominant religion of the Roman empire.

This treatise is intended to direct attention to one portion only of this proof, viz. to the moral and spiritual teaching which is contained in the New Testament. My object will be to show that the existence in it of its high moral and spiritual elements is incompatible with the theories which modern unbelief has propounded as the alternative of its historical truth. In confining myself to the moral elements of Christianity, let me be clearly understood as not intending to throw the slightest disparagement on its historical proof, I only observe that the moral proof of our Lord's divine mission was one on which He especially dwelt. I consider it as specially suited to meet the present aspects of the controversy between Christianity and unbelief. Above all, nothing is equally fitted for resolving the difficulties of those whose faith has been shaken by modern controversies.

It will be necessary to state the line of ar-

gument which is proposed to be adopted. I shall assume nothing but the existence of the New Testament. I shall treat it as I would any other book. Whence came it? If its originators were characters such as they are asserted to have been by my opponents, how have its moral and spiritual elements been introduced into it? Is its moral teaching consistent with the supposition that the alleged originators of Christianity were credulous enthusiasts? Will any supposition but its superhuman origin satisfy the condition of the case?

The question whether the documents of which it is composed are historically true is an all-important one. If they are so, it is impossible to resist the evidence of the superhuman character of the person and work of Christ our Lord. Only three suppositions are possible as the alternative of their historical character. Either they are wilful frauds; or they are mythical and legendary; or they have been evolved by causes purely natural in conformity with those laws which regulate the development of the moral and spiritual worlds. The first of these alternatives it will be needless to consider, for it has been abandoned by all intelligent opponents of Christianity. On the remaining two I must offer a few brief observa-

tions for the purpose of pointing out the bearing of the argument upon them.

On examining the contents of the New Testament we find that it possesses several marked peculiarities which distinguish it from all other writings. It consists of five memoirs, twenty-one letters, and an apocalypse. The five memoirs contain a miraculous story, into the very structure of which is interwoven a most elevated system of moral teaching. Four of these memoirs, in addition to the facts, or, as my opponents say, legendary fictions, of which they consist, present us with a delineation of the greatest of all the characters which have either existed as fact or been depicted by fancy—that of Christ our Lord. The question necessarily arises, Whence came the character and its great moral and spiritual lineaments?

It is no answer to the problem to reply that the miraculous stories contained in the Gospels prove that they are bundles of fictions united with a few grains of historic truth. Such an answer might be entitled to consideration if they contained nothing but statements of alleged facts. But the character and moral teaching are there, and must be accounted for. Still more important is the consideration that the character itself is composed by the union of

the entire mass of facts or legends and myths which constitute the narrative; and these are indissolubly interwoven with the most perfect system of moral teaching which has ever been invented by man. Is it conceivable that such a character and such teaching can have originated in the mere placing together of a multitude of fabulous stories united with a few grains of historic truth?

The mode in which this great character has been delineated is worthy of our deepest attention. The characters in ordinary histories are artificial delineations created by the genius of the historian, and intended to impress on his readers his views of the different actors in the scenes which he describes. But in the Gospels we find nothing at all analogous to this. Not one of the Evangelists has once attempted to give an artificial delineation of his Master's character. Nor are the facts which compose it arranged artistically, so as to force it obviously on the attention. Yet the character is portrayed as distinctly as if it had been delineated with the most perfect artistic skill. This is consistent with the assumption that the character is a delineation copied from the life, but with no other theory.

But if the theories of my opponents be

correct, the Gospels consist not only of a multitude of fictitious narratives, but these had no inconsiderable number of inventors. It follows, therefore, that the great character of Jesus Christ, and the moral elements contained in the Gospels, must have resulted from the placing together of a chaos of materials which were the creation of various minds; and that these must have spontaneously fallen into their proper places, so as to generate the perfect whole. The production of Milton's "Paradise Lost" by accidentally throwing up the letters of the English alphabet seems equally credible.

But further: not only do the Gospels present us with the delineation of this great character, but they also contain a great system of moral teaching closely interwoven with it, and growing out of it what is designed for the guidance of ordinary men. Now, on the supposition that they are fictitious, the question at once arises, How did this body of elevated morality get incorporated with this mass of fables? It is fundamental to every theory of modern unbelief, to enable it to account for the origin of Christianity on principles purely natural, to assume that the primitive followers of Jesus were men of the most unbounded credulity. But such

men have never invented a morality applicable to all the times and conditions of men and characterized by the highest purity. A similar phenomenon cannot be found in history.

Next let it be observed, that a unity of thought underlies the moral teaching of the Gospels. I am aware that this has been denied in a few inconsiderable instances; but it is impossible to assert that this is not the case with all its great principles. Whence, then, came this unity? The assumption of their historical truth is an adequate account of it. In that case it would have resulted from the actual teaching of Jesus Christ. But the unity is utterly inconsistent with the theories of my opponents.

But further: if the legends and fables of which the Gospels are said to consist have been the invention of many authors, it follows that their elevated moral teaching must have formed the spiritual atmosphere in which these fabulists habitually lived; and that they have succeeded in impressing it on the whole mass of fictions which they created. I ask my opponents to point out a single instance in history in which a body of credulous enthusiasts have habitually breathed an atmosphere of elevated morality.

The phenomena presented by the Gospels

involve the impugners of their historic truth in a further difficulty. They assert that they have been put together so inartificially, that they present us with such a mass of contradictions, as to matters of fact, as at once to deprive them of all historical value. Yet their moral unity is perfect. My opponents being witnesses, it is a fact which cannot be questioned, that three of the Gospels have succeeded in impressing on their moral teaching the impress of the same mind. Their morality is neither that of Matthew, Mark, nor Luke, but of Christ.

But further: the entire moral and spiritual atmosphere which we breathe in the Gospels is diffused throughout all the other writings of the New Testament. Each of these presupposes the existence of the moral and spiritual portraiture of Jesus Christ; and their moral teaching, as well as the moral and spiritual life which they breathe, is founded on His person. The twenty-one letters present us with the strongest indications of truthfulness and personal earnestness on the part of the writers. No inconsiderable portion of them is devoted to moral teaching, and the whole of them bear the strongest impress, not of the morality of their authors, but of Christ.

Now if the theory of unbelievers is true, that the story of the Gospels was slowly elaborated during a period of not less than seventy years, it follows that the moral teaching of the epistles cannot have been copied from that of the Gospels, but must have been elaborated independently of them. These writers were six, if not seven in number; and if many of the writings, as my opponents assert, are forgeries, their numbers must have been still greater. Yet the same aspect of moral teaching underlies them all. While we discern the individuality of these writers, the morality is that of Christ.

But the teaching of the entire New Testament possesses another trait of a singularly unique character. Besides laying down all the great fundamental principles of morality, its greatest efforts are concentrated on the application to the mind of man of a new spiritual influence capable of imparting a vitality both to its principles and precepts. It proclaims that its most special function is not so much the enunciation of a system of sound morality as the creation of such a power. It assumes that the ordinary motives of morality are not in themselves sufficiently powerful to give man the victory over the corruption which is in him. If the moral law is to become the regulating

principle of life, a force additional to these must be brought to bear on human nature. Previous moral teachers confessed this, and admitted their inability to create it. This the teaching of the New Testament professes itself able to supply, and places the centre of this mighty influence in the person of Jesus Christ.

The idea of creating a new spiritual power is a mighty and a bold conception. Previous moralists sighed for such a power, but were unable to create it. Yet the conception of it underlies the entire moral teaching of the New Testament, and constitutes its distinctive peculiarity. It is undeniable that it has succeeded in bringing one of mighty potency to bear on the human mind. The conception is one that would not have entered the head of a number of credulous fanatics.

A clear comprehension of the moral teaching of the New Testament has a most important bearing on the claims of Christianity to be a divine Revelation. If its morality be of a highly elevated character, if it is separated by a wide interval from all previous systems of teaching, if it brings to bear on man a mighty spiritual power previously unknown, if it differs from any other system in the wide catholicity of its principles and their universal adaptation to man,

if its entire teaching is free from every thing which is narrow, and is suited to every age and every condition of society, it is evident that such facts are at issue with the theories of our opponents, that Christianity originated in fanaticism, credulity, or falsehood.[3] Still more fatal is it to the idea that its teaching is a gradual development, in conformity with natural laws, out of the existing condition of moral thought and feeling at the period of the advent. The only alternative is, that the assertion of its writers, that it is a divine revelation, is true.

To enable us to appreciate the force of this reasoning, it will be necessary to examine the entire moral teaching of the New Testament in its widest sense. I shall proceed, therefore, to inquire what has been effected by those teachers of morality who have elaborated their systems independently of its influence; and in what particulars their strength and weakness lay. I shall then endeavour to point out those portions of its teaching to which philosophy has set the seal of its application, as well as those which are unique. In doing this it will be absolutely necessary that I should draw attention to the elevation and grandeur of the character of Jesus Christ, and the

moral perfection which it embodies, as it not only constitutes the great spiritual power of Christianity, but is the groundwork of its teaching. I shall then proceed to consider the perfection of the moral teaching of the New Testament, its all-embracing character, and its adaptation to the wants, not of a single nation or race, but of man. It will be impossible to exhibit this fully, without at the same time carefully examining the various objections which have been brought against it, as well as the alleged deficiencies of its teaching; and showing that they rest on no solid foundation. I shall then briefly examine the suitability and philosophical character of what may be called the speciality of Christian teaching, viz. that spiritual power which it brings to bear on the reason, conscience, and affections of man, for the purpose of enabling the moral law to dominate in the heart, and rendering obedience to its dictates possible.

If a careful investigation of these subjects proves that the writers of the New Testament have handled them in a manner which the genius of philosophy failed to accomplish, then it is impossible that any of the theories of my opponents can be an adequate account of the

origin of Christianity. If these fail, the only other alternative is, that the Christian Scriptures are historically true. From their truth it follows that Christianity is a divine Revelation.

CHAPTER II.

IS MAN CAPABLE OF DISCOVERING MORAL AND SPIRITUAL TRUTH INDEPENDENTLY OF A REVELATION?

This subject has been needlessly dragged into the controversy both by the opponents and the defenders of Christianity. Its opponents have objected that a considerable portion of its moral teaching can be found elsewhere; and that if man can discover moral truth for himself, a revelation is needless. In reply to this, some of its defenders have had recourse to unsupported theories and dangerous assertions. It has been replied that man is unable to discover any portion of moral truth without supernatural aid. But as the existence of heathen ethics prior to Christianity is an undeniable fact, it has been assumed, without a particle of evidence, that the light which heathen philosophers possessed on moral subjects was either derived from a primitive revelation, or plundered from the Jewish Scriptures. The same feeling has led others unduly to depreciate

the light possessed by the ancient world prior to the advent of Christianity. Unbelievers, on the other hand, from similar causes have been led greatly to exaggerate certain resemblances between the teaching of philosophy and that of the New Testament.

To discuss these subjects adequately would require an entire treatise. All that I shall therefore attempt on the present occasion is, to lay down a few general principles for the purpose of determining how far they have any real bearing on the subject before us.

I. As a general principle, it by no means follows, because we meet with two similar precepts in different authors, that one of them must have been borrowed from the other. Still less is it the case, that the systems of which they form a portion must be the same. Yet this is constantly taken for granted. It should further be observed, that as far as similarities between Christian and heathen ethics are concerned, they are found, not in the systems, but in the detached precepts of each. I am aware that passages in some degree resembling, but yet not identical with, the precept, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," may be quoted from heathen writers. But the identity of the one to the

other is entirely dependent on the nature of the systems of which they form a portion.

A striking illustration of this is contained in the writings of the latter Stoical philosophy. No portion of ancient teaching has been alleged to contain so striking a resemblance in some of its precepts to portions of the New Testament. But it would be the greatest of mistakes to infer the similarity of the one to the other. It is hardly possible to exaggerate the width of the gulf which separates the principles of Christianity and Stoicism taken as a whole. A few contrasts will illustrate this. The fundamental principle of Stoicism is the deification of human nature. That of Christianity is its humiliation, as the road to its glorification. Stoicism teaches that the wise man is in all things self-sufficient for his own happiness, independently of any thing external to himself. Christianity teaches his dependence on God. Fate and Pantheism lie at the bottom of the entire system of Stoical teaching. God and freedom are ideas essential to Christian morality. The real question at issue is, not whether a few precepts of Christianity may be found in ancient writers, but whether its teaching, as an entire system, can be discovered in the ancient world. The answer must be in the negative.

II. Equally false is the inference, that because our natural reason is able to discover for itself the great principles of duty and obligation, that additional light is either unnecessary or undesirable; and that consequently a supernatural revelation has not been given. If these discoveries had been twenty times as numerous as they have been, it is impossible to deny that a large amount of additional light was not only desirable, but necessary, when we reflect that despite of them the great masses of mankind remained sunken in a state of moral degradation. It is useless to argue such a point, when we have the confession of the very persons who made these alleged discoveries, that an addition of knowledge would have been thankfully accepted by them.

III. Still more worthless is the inference, because it is possible to discover the great principles of duty, that therefore a revelation which is capable of discovering a new moral power, by which what is right may be enforced on the practice, is unnecessary. None more readily confessed the imperfection of the forces which Philosophy had at her command for the purpose of acting on the conscience than the philosophers themselves. All the

great writers of antiquity fully admitted the weakness of the moral powers with which they were acquainted to balance the violence of the passions. They therefore contemplated the condition of the great masses of mankind with a feeling of hopeless despair, and viewed their teachings as unable to effect their regeneration.

IV. Equally unwise is the attempt of some of the defenders of Christianity, to prove that man is incapable of discovering any moral truth independently of a revelation. In the first place, the assertion contradicts all the known facts of history. Secondly, the idea of a moral being who is unable to discover any portion of moral truth for himself, is a direct contradiction of terms. Thirdly, Christianity directly recognizes the fact that man has a conscience capable of distinguishing between right and wrong. A being with a conscience, yet unable to discover moral truth, is an absurdity. Fourthly, St. Paul distinctly asserts man's natural power of discovering moral truth: "When the Gentiles which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves."

V. Equally unsound is the ground taken

by some when they endeavour unduly to depreciate the amount of moral truth which has been discovered by man's natural reason, under the assumption that to admit that he has made any important discoveries is so much damage done to the cause of Christianity.

I object to this procedure for the following reasons. First, it is incorrect in fact, that philosophy has not succeeded in discovering a very considerable amount of moral truth; and the charge that it has derived it from a revelation of which the memorials have perished, is a gratuitous assumption.

Secondly, it subverts the grounds on which the claims of a moral revelation must rest: the independent witness of the conscience and moral nature of man to its discoveries.

Thirdly, it would deprive it of the most important testimony which we shall hereafter see is borne by philosophy to the great truths of the moral teaching of Christianity—its independent witness that it is in accordance with the wants of man.

An illustration will make this matter plain. No man in common life would think it necessary to abolish the use of candles for the purpose of proving that the sun is one of the greatest of blessings, or even to depreciate their utility. In

the same manner, it is needless to affirm that man is destitute of all moral light, or to attempt to depreciate what he is actually possessed of, for the purpose of convincing us of the desirableness of a great additional moral and spiritual illumination. Let the natural illumination afforded by reason be estimated as highly as it may be, it is a plain and obvious fact, that the great masses of mankind have in all ages been sunk in a state of moral and spiritual degradation; and that those who have enjoyed the highest illumination of reason would most thankfully have accepted more light on man's moral and spiritual condition. Even if man could have discovered every duty and every obligation for himself, the weakness of the moral and spiritual forces which reason could bring to bear for the purpose of effecting his regeneration and enforcing the moral law in his practice, would be a sufficient reason for such a revelation as that contained in the Christian Scriptures.

I now proceed to investigate the nature of the interval which separates the truths of Christianity from all previous discoveries in morality.

CHAPTER III.

THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE MORAL TEACHING OF CHRISTIANITY HAS BEEN ANTICIPATED BY PREVIOUS INQUIRERS.

To enable us to appreciate the degree of evidence which the moral teaching of the New Testament gives to its historical truth, it will be necessary to form a clear conception of the interval which separates the discoveries of reason from those of Revelation. If the teaching of Jesus Christ is separated by a wide interval from that of all the previous teachers of mankind, the supposition that the Gospels are the dreamy creations of credulous enthusiasts is intrinsically absurd. To suppose that blind credulity has effected what the highest efforts of reason have been unable to accomplish is equivalent to proclaiming that chance dominates in human life.

It should be observed that the moral teaching of Christianity consists of two portions: one which is common to it and previously existing

systems; and another which transcends them. The former proves that Christian teaching and that of the highest reason are at substantial agreement. The latter, that it is impossible to account for the origin of Christianity on any of the suppositions suggested by our opponents. For the purpose of exhibiting the force of the argument it will be necessary to take a general view of the discoveries which reason has effected in morality independently of Revelation.

It is evident that if we want to take an impartial view of the subject, our inquiries must be confined to the times prior to the advent of Christianity. Otherwise we shall be in danger of attributing to reason what has been really a discovery of revelation. Nothing which the unbeliever has a fair right to demand is lost by confining the investigation within these limits. There never has existed a period in which the entire ground of obligation, including the most careful analysis of man and his motives, has been made the subject of freer inquiry than during the flourishing period of ancient philosophy. So unrestrained was it, and prosecuted with such unbounded energy, that it is hardly possible that any thing material can have been overlooked by it. Nothing is easier now, after

the light of Christianity has shed its illumination on man's moral and spiritual condition, than to assert that if it had never appeared reason would have succeeded in discovering every great principle which is peculiar to its teaching. But our only mode of judging what reason could have discovered independently of revelation, is by inquiring what it has succeeded in accomplishing in the highest periods of its activity.

First: ancient philosophy fully recognized all the fundamental principles of moral obligation. She taught the truth of man's responsibility for his actions, and that he possesses an inward power by which he distinguishes right from wrong, however much philosophers might differ as to its origin. She also recognized the truth, that within a certain limit man is the creator of his own character. She also laid down with distinctness, that freedom is an essential condition of a moral action; and that it is impossible that a man could be either virtuous or vicious unless he is a free agent. Philosophy no less distinctly recognized that virtuous actions possess an inherent moral beauty, and that the essence of a virtuous action consists in the inward motive, not in the bare outward act. The most essential point of her teaching

was, that a man can only become virtuous by performing virtuous actions, and that he becomes vicious by doing vicious ones. Virtue with her assumed a character partly intellectual and partly moral, and was equivalent to enlightened reason[1]. At the same time she fully recognized the existence of evil principles in man, and confessed her inability to subject the violence of the passions to any adequate restraint. In one word, all the great principles of morality which are fundamental to Christianity were recognized by the majority of the schools of ancient philosophy.

But her voice became indistinct when she endeavoured to find a centre on which to base the great principle of obligation. The idea of duty implies two things: the action itself, and the obligation to perform it. The very notion of obligation implies that a duty is due to some one; and the degree of its force will depend on our ability to centre it in some one who possesses a binding power, who is distinct from ourselves, and is no mere creation of our own minds. The primary idea of duty is that of debt. It is capable of being elevated into a sense of right, of which the notion "ought" is the exponent. Now it is

[1] Aristotle's Ethics, Book VI.

self-evident that a debt which is only due to ourselves is no debt at all. It resembles taking money out of one pocket and putting it into another. The great weakness of philosophy consisted in its inability to find an external power on which to centre the force of obligation. It recognized in man a sense of responsibility; but it placed its centre in an abstraction which was devoid of moral power[2].

The cause of this is obvious. The philosophers were unable to place the centre of human responsibility in God. While most of their schools admitted His existence, the majority of them denied His personality, and scarcely one of them conceived of Him as a Being possessed of moral attributes, or as a Governor to whom men are responsible for their actions. For similar reasons its teaching on the immortality of the soul was too indefinite to impart force to the sense of responsibility. The result was, that ancient philosophy utterly separated morality from religion. The philosophic religion was destitute of a Personal God who took an active oversight of the affairs of

[2] The Greek idea of obligation was founded on the sense of the morally beautiful, *τὸ καλόν*. See Aristotle's Ethics *passim*. The student of this remarkable book is painfully impressed with its absence of moral power. The philosopher himself was deeply sensible of it.

men. It could, therefore, bring no sanction to bear on man's moral nature. The popular deities were stained with every form of vice. It was therefore impossible that the sanctions of holiness should be made to centre in beings whose chief attributes were crimes.

The result was, that philosophy was compelled to place the centre of obligation in an abstraction. Man was obliged to pursue a virtuous course of action because it was morally beautiful to practise virtue, or because self-sacrifice was noble. The latter principle frequently incurred the danger of making the opinions of others the standard of virtuous conduct, and consequently of representing the distinctions between right and wrong as rather conventional than real. It is obvious that such motives were destitute of all adequate force to resist the vehemence of the passions. Of this the philosopher was deeply conscious. He therefore felt, that unless he could place the duty of virtue on the principle of self-interest, and thus reduce virtuous conduct to a course of prudent calculation, it was necessary to merge the individual in the community. Hence the constant tendency of ancient philosophy to make morality a branch of politics.

II. Philosophy had also, with considerable success, set itself to the elaboration of a code of duties, and to the determination of their limits and character. While these embraced many elevated principles, it must not be forgotten that they were disfigured by considerable imperfections. The obligation of the duties of man to man was not erected on the principle of an universal brotherhood of mankind, but on the narrow obligations of race to race, and citizen to citizen; and not unfrequently the highest moral obligations were compelled to yield to supposed political necessities. Equally certain is it, that however elevated may have been many of the detached precepts of individual philosophers, not one of them succeeded in evolving the great principles of the New Testament as a comprehensive whole. What they succeeded in accomplishing was simply this. Different philosophers at different times elaborated different principles, as parts of distinct systems founded on detached precepts which bore a greater or less degree of analogy to some of the great precepts which are contained in the New Testament, as, for example, the command, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

But even these are often laden with foreign

and even hostile elements, which entirely modify their character. There was a sense in which the Stoical philosophy taught the universal brotherhood of mankind. But a brotherhood founded on the heartless principles of Pantheism could breathe no vitality into the human bosom. Modern systems of thought can teach the same doctrine, that mankind are brothers, because they are descended from a common ape as their progenitor. But though the mere doctrine is the same as the Christian one, the one has a moral force of which the other is wholly destitute. A mere sameness of terms must not therefore cheat us into a belief of the sameness of realities.

III. Philosophy had also, with considerable success, addressed itself to the analysis of the different virtues, assigning to them the proper spheres of their operation. But her classification of them was, in some most important points, directly antagonistic to that adopted by Christianity. The latter has assigned the highest place in her spiritual temple to the milder and more unobtrusive virtues; the former to the heroic and political ones[3]. In this respect the distinction is absolute and complete. To some of the most important virtues of

[3] Ethics, Books III. and IV.

Christianity philosophy has given no recognition whatever. As this subject embraces considerations of the highest importance, I shall fully discuss it hereafter.

But, as the philosophers truly said, it was comparatively easy to ascertain what is right, but very difficult to practise it. They therefore inquired with the deepest earnestness for some power which had sufficient potency to make virtue an actuality. The only one with which they were acquainted was the principle of habit; but mighty as were its influences under favourable circumstances, they discerned its impotency to effect the regeneration of the morally corrupt, or to resist the might of the appetites and passions[4]. The philosopher, therefore, had no satisfactory answer to return to the question, How was a man to become virtuous? His only answer was, By performing virtuous actions[5]. As a recipe for making men virtuous, it was as simple as it was inefficacious. "First," said he, "provide yourself with men who have a natural tendency to virtue[6]. Secondly, subject them to a careful training in accordance with laws enforced by the

[4] Aristotle's Ethics, Book VII. [5] Ethics, Book II.
[6] Ibid. Books II. and X.

coercive power of the state[7]. Thirdly, let them constantly practise virtuous actions. By so doing they will in time become confirmed in virtuous habits. Virtuous habits will create virtuous principles[8]." Such was his mode of creating virtuous characters. It is evident that if this is the only remedy, the masses of mankind must continue sunk in their degradation. Christianity proclaims that she has a better and more adequate remedy, and has used it during more than eighteen centuries with an efficacy compared with which all the results of philosophic teaching have been weakness. Is human or divine?

7 Aristotle's Politics, *passim*. Plato's Republic.

8 Ethics, Books II. and VII.

CHAPTER IV.

THE TESTIMONY WHICH PHILOSOPHY RENDERS TO CHRISTIANITY VIEWED IN ITS NEGATIVE ASPECT.

This constitutes a most important branch of our subject. Philosophy has rendered the highest service to Christianity by enabling us to determine what Reason, after exhausting all her efforts, was unable to accomplish.

Let it be observed, then, that not only was philosophy unable to grapple with many of the most important questions connected with the moral condition of mankind, but it confessed its inability to do so. The philosophers admitted their inability to enforce that moral law which they recognized as true by any motive of sufficient power to render it the dominating principle over the life. The weakness of philosophy consisted not so much in its ignorance of the great principles of obligation, as in its inability to enforce them.

The reason of this is obvious. Man consists

not only of reason and conscience, but of these united with a multitude of affections, appetites, and passions. Their force to impel man to action is out of all proportion greater than that which is exerted by the rational principle. Their unrestrained action tends to evil. The only way of resisting this tendency is to create a power capable of controlling them. This Philosophy earnestly sought for, but failed to find; she scarcely presents us with an attempt to grapple with the heart.

Its failure to grapple with the masses of mankind is most instructive. Of this it did not hesitate to make open confession. It is not too much to say that prior to the advent of Christianity its whole tone respecting them is one of hopeless despair.

The altered tone of thought on this subject in times subsequent to the advent is a most remarkable fact. One of the most favourite dogmas of those modern schools which reject Christianity, is the tendency of human nature to gradual but progressive improvement. Nothing is more certain than that this opinion was a stranger to the schools of ancient philosophy. If they assigned to man any millennium at all, they invariably placed it in some unknown region of the past. Towards the future

they looked with dark forebodings. It must never be forgotten, that philosophy never taught the indefinite perfectibility of mankind until the influences of Christianity had become widely spread.

The moral teaching of the ancient world was intended for the benefit of the upper ten thousand, i. e. for the moral and intellectual aristocracy of mankind. The philosophers emphatically declared that their hopes of doing good were limited to those who were born with virtuous tendencies. In one word, as moral physicians, they undertook to prescribe only for those who were in a tolerable state of health. But in cases of moral and spiritual degradation they did not hesitate to confess that they had no medicine adequate to effect a cure [1].

Nothing more strongly proves the impotency of philosophy to exert an influence for good on the masses of mankind than its failure to create a missionary spirit. No philosopher felt himself impelled to undertake the office of prophet or of preacher to the masses. He neither exhorted them to repentance nor

[1] The conclusion of the Tenth Book of the Ethics is a striking testimony to the weakness of the power which philosophy could exert on the majority of mankind.

attempted to ameliorate their condition. The great majority of mankind lay wholly beyond the pale of his influence. Perhaps nothing would have excited more unbounded ridicule than if one of the votaries of philosophy had issued from the schools for the purpose of preaching its doctrines to the vulgar. Christianity first sent a message of mercy to the spiritually halt, the maimed, the lame, and the blind.

It will be perhaps objected that Pythagoras and Socrates constitute two exceptions. But the objection is founded on a mistake similar to that committed by the actors in the first French Revolution, who imagined that the aristocratic Brutus was a demagogue like themselves. Both these philosophers addressed themselves to a mental aristocracy. Both were Greeks in thought, in morality, and nationality. They would have pronounced the idea of founding a Catholic Church, which was to consist of all races and conditions of mankind, as the wildest of chimeras.

As far as the masses were concerned, the only hope which the philosopher entertained of acting on them for good was through the power of legislation. If he were entrusted with the legislative powers of the state, he would enforce the practice of virtue, and re-

strain the practice of vice by law. He proposed to make his citizens virtuous by a gradual course of training, and to put down with a strong hand teachings in opposition to his own. But he never got beyond a theory, for no state, great or small, could be persuaded to entrust him with the powers of legislation.

This brings out in a striking point of view the contrasts between the teaching of philosophy and Christianity. The speculations of the former on morality were essentially political. The works of all the most eminent of ancient moralists contain the delineation of an ideal state, and a code of laws by which the citizens should be trained to virtue. Christianity never directly attempts to deal with men in masses, but addresses them as individuals. Yet the one never got beyond the schools; the other has created the Church.

The position of hopelessness to which the teachings of philosophy consigned the masses of mankind is of the greatest importance in reference to this argument. It treated them with contempt, and left them to their fate. Christianity has taken the opposite course.

How could the philosopher do otherwise? He had no spiritual power which was capable of reaching their case. To enable him to bring

those with which he was acquainted into action, two things were necessary. First, that those to whom they were to be applied should be capable of appreciating them [2]. Secondly, that their force should be superior to that of the appetites and passions. The only power with which he was acquainted, apart from that of habit, was an appeal to the moral beauty and fitness of virtue; and that the practice of it was generally conducive to happiness. But to present these as a counterpoise to the violence of the passions resembles the attempt to resist the violence of the waves of the Atlantic by a mop.

The only powerful moral force with which philosophy was acquainted was that of habit. Still, mighty as is its power to sustain a man on a course on which he has once entered, it is utterly powerless to effect the regeneration of one who has become tainted with moral and spiritual corruption. The causes of this inefficiency it is worth while briefly to investigate, as it will enable us to estimate the wisdom of the mode in which Christianity has grappled with the moral and spiritual diseases of mankind.

[2] Aristotle teaches that virtue is a habit, for the formation of which a certain amount of natural goodness is necessary.

It is impossible to deny the mighty force with which the principle of habit acts on mankind. To a certain extent it may be said to have made us what we are. Each of us is born into a particular atmosphere of thought and feeling. We are surrounded by its influences, and drink them in with every breath. By repeated actions it gradually stamps its influence on our characters, and in fact forms them. By means of habit society presses on the individual its views, feelings, and ideas. In the character thus impressed on them by the conditions of their birth, ordinary men develope themselves, grow to maturity, and die. The action of the power is a gradual and an almost imperceptible one; but over the masses of mankind its sway is supreme.

The power of the principle of habit may be illustrated by the action of the lever and the fulcrum. A lever acts with mighty force when it rests on a fulcrum adequate to its support. Without a suitable support it is powerless. So it is with the principle of habit: it is a powerful lever in the moral world, slow but yet mighty in its action. But to call forth its latent power, it is necessary that it should rest on an adequate support. If it is deficient in this, it is powerless.

The vantage-ground on which the principle of habit acts in the formation of the character of man is the moral and spiritual atmosphere, the entire line of thought and feeling of the society into which he is born. Under its influence our character is gradually developed. If it has the aid of pure and holy principles to begin with, it will be a powerful means of developing the principle of goodness. But if the moral and spiritual atmosphere which we habitually breathe is contaminated, its action will be the reverse, and it will become the means of deepening the principle of evil.

It follows, therefore, from the very nature of habit, that it is an unfit instrument to do the work of the moral and spiritual reformer. If the mind were a mere *tabula rasa*, the case would be different; but if it is the only moral power through which an imperfect or corrupt man can be trained to goodness, the case is hopeless. The very idea of a character formed by habit is that its principles are weak and imperfect, and that they gradually acquire force and strength. How, then, is it possible that in their incipient state of weakness they should be capable of waging a successful struggle with the tendencies of a formed

character, or with the violence of the passions[3]?

But the slowness of its action is alone sufficient to unfit it for being the great reforming principle in man. If corruption can only be rolled back by slow and gradual stages, the short interval of human life will be expended before any progress can be made. The passions act with a mighty force. To resist them, a power must be created which is capable of counterbalancing them, or the regeneration of man is impossible.

These considerations make it evident why it was that philosophy was so completely at fault in dealing with the mass of human corruption by which it was surrounded. Being devoid of profound spiritual convictions, it had no means of penetrating to the depths of the human spirit. In exerting the power of habit, it found the ground completely preoccupied, and an enemy in possession of the very centre of its strength. All that a philosopher could say to one in whom the principles of evil had taken root was, "Begin the work of reformation by performing virtuous actions. After

[3] The Seventh Book of the Ethics is a most striking proof of the difficulties with which ancient philosophy had to struggle in the work of reforming mankind.

sufficient exercise and practice, this will form in you virtuous habits, and after a sufficient interval, these will deepen into virtuous principles." If to this the reasonable objection was made, How is it possible for one with strong tendencies to evil, or in whom the violence of passion overpowers the dictates of conscience, to perform these virtuous actions? Philosophy had no answer whatever to give. It was impossible for her, therefore, to issue forth from the schools and proclaim a gospel of good news to the outcast, to the profligate, or even men in whom habits of vice were formed. Her failure in this point of view is most striking, and of it she was fully conscious, for she never made one effort to grapple with the moral degeneracy of the masses. She felt that her mission was the very reverse of that which our Lord described His to be. He asserted that the primary object of His mission was not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. She proclaimed aloud her utter inability to deal with the sinner, and confined her efforts to the comparatively good. Even within this narrow sphere the results which she could accomplish were feeble [4].

This negative testimony of Philosophy

[4] See Ethics, Books VII. and X.

is of the highest importance. It recognized the void, and its own inability to fill it up. It is impossible to deny that human reason had scrutinized this point to the utmost prior to the advent. The whole force of ancient intellect had been devoted to the subject. The entire moral nature of man had been analyzed by men of the most powerful intellectual grasp. They sought in every direction for a power able to grapple with man's imperfection and corruption. The only one which they clearly discerned the efficacy of failed to meet the case.

Being in despair of benefiting the masses, the utmost which the philosopher thought that he could accomplish was to keep them in order. Even in his ability to effect this he was not sanguine. The difficulties of his task led him to adopt many unworthy methods which afforded him a chance of effecting his purpose. Hence he too frequently connived at, or even took part in, the institutions of a religion in which he wholly disbelieved. To use the oft-quoted words of Gibbon, "as a philosopher, he thought all religions equally false; as a statesman, he considered them all equally useful."

Let us now observe the point of the argu-

ment at which we have arrived. Philosophy manifested its complete failure as the spiritual physician of mankind. Christianity has announced that it is able to accomplish the very things which Philosophy declared that it was unable to effect; it has now for more than eighteen centuries been steadily attempting to carry them into execution. Where philosophy has benefited one man, Christianity has at least benefited ten millions.

I shall hereafter examine whether a sound Philosophy will affix the seal of her approbation to the means employed by Christianity to effect the result. For the present it is sufficient to observe, that Christianity has succeeded in filling the void which the utmost efforts of philosophy did not succeed in suggesting even the means of accomplishing. What is the inference?

Ancient philosophy was the result of the profoundest efforts of the intellect of man; yet it failed not only to find, but even to conceive of, a power capable of regenerating mankind, and it abandoned the attempt as visionary. Christianity has conceived of a power capable of effecting it. It has set it in action with a singular efficacy and might. It has been steadily operating during a long course of ages. During this period an over-

whelming majority of the noblest, the holiest, and the best have accepted it as adequate to their spiritual needs. Multitudes of the degraded, the miserable, and the outcast have looked up to it as the polestar of their hopes. A multitude of sinners which no man can number have become morally regenerated by its mighty influences. These are not theories, but facts.

If this be the case, to assert that intellect produced philosophy, and credulous enthusiasm Christianity, is to reverse all the conditions of human thought, and to deny the reality of all mental and moral law. It is equivalent to the assertion that all mental effort is a folly.

CHAPTER V.

THE SPECIALITIES WHICH DISTINGUISH THE MORAL TEACHING OF CHRISTIANITY FROM THAT OF THE ANCIENT PHILOSOPHERS AND MORALISTS.

A CLEAR comprehension of this is essential to the argument. It is impossible fully to estimate what has been accomplished by Christianity unless we can attain a clear view of the interval which separates it from the highest forms of ancient thought which have been evolved independently of its influence.

The moral teaching of Christianity consists of three portions, which, although distinct, are yet intimately interwoven with each other.

First, it evolves the great principles of universal morality applicable to man as a rational and moral being.

Secondly, it presents us with the highest ideal of morality exhibited in the life and actions of Jesus Christ.

Thirdly, it professes to impart to man a spiritual power of sufficient potency to enable the moral law to become the dominating prin-

ciple over his entire being; in other words, it proclaims itself the regenerator of mankind.

In this chapter I shall consider the contrasts between philosophic and Christian teaching in the first division of the subject. The two others, which constitute the most distinguishing feature of Christianity, I will consider separately.

First contrast: — The moral teaching of Christianity is distinguished by its completeness. At the same time it is strikingly brief and unsystematic. It may be said to have been evolved under the pressure of circumstances. All its great principles seem to be brought forth incidentally and without the marks of deliberate intention. The teaching of philosophy was, on the contrary, uniformly systematic. Yet that of Christianity contains all the great principles of morality applicable to all nations and times, and supplies us with a practical solution of all great moral questions far better than the elaborate treatment of the philosophers.

It is a remarkable fact that the morality of Christianity has to be gathered from at least eight different authors. Yet their moral teachings constitute a harmonious whole. No similar phenomenon is presented by any eight writings

of either the ancient or modern world which have been composed by eight separate authors, and which profess to evolve a system of moral teaching of a far more elevated character than that which is current in society. While the individual peculiarities of these eight writers are most marked, and their mental constitutions widely different, yet every where do we find that the moral teaching of the one weaves into that of another as parts of a great whole. Their mode of teaching is also the same. They all agree in laying down great principles of morality, and nowhere attempt to evolve a complete code of ethical duties. In each of these writers we find a complete absence of rules merely artificial. The peculiarity of the result is, that nowhere have we the morality of any one of these eight writers, but the moral teaching of Christ. In these respects the contrast is complete.

Second contrast:—The all-embracing character of the teaching of Christianity stands forth in marked contrast with the partial character of the most elevated heathen morality. Its great moral principles are as wide as human nature. They know no distinction of nation, race, or condition. They are erected on two great foundations—the common Fatherhood of

God and the brotherhood of all men to each other, while the Church itself was to be composed of every variety of race and condition. To Christians there is one body and one spirit. They are called to a common hope. They have one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and a common God and Father, who is above all, through all, and in all. From these privileges no accident of birth or artificial distinction of society can exclude. No, nor any amount of moral evil which has been repented of and forsaken.

Widely different from this were the ancient views of obligation. Ignorant of these two great principles, the only bond which united man to man was the political one. Hence the principles of obligation which were recognized by the ancient world were those which regulated the intercourse of citizens with each other. Beyond these it admitted, in a far fainter degree, the bonds of race. But it scarcely recognized obligation as existing between men as men [1]. Outside the narrow pale of race a sense of duty may be said hardly to have existed. A state of war nearly destroyed all sense of obligation as between Greek

[1] Any one who wishes to form a clear conception of the deficiencies of ancient philosophy on this point must study Aristotle's great work on Politics.

and Greek. So profound was the separation between the different races of mankind, that the distinction which separated the higher from the lower was nearly as clearly marked as that which separates man from the different races of animals.

This narrow spirit had in some degree been diminished by the teachings of philosophy Still it was unable to emancipate itself from the ideas of the times. One of the greatest moral teachers of the ancient world distinctly avows that a slave, if a man of alien race, was a kind of living tool[2]; and that war was the natural state between the Greek and the barbarian. In war no common rights existed, but it was lawful to plunder, to enslave, and to destroy. It may be quite true that an assemblage in a Roman theatre once applauded a line of a poet which asserted the existence of a common humanity in man. But neither the teachings of the philosophers nor the plaudits of the multitude produced any practical results in ameliorating their condition. The same mob ruthlessly witnessed the murder of thousands of gladiators for their amusement, and clamourously demanded the death of the vanquished foe, while the philosopher looked coldly on.

[2] Directly asserted in the Politics.

Christianity has taught that the Jew, the Greek, the barbarian, Scythian, bond and free, male and female, are all one in Jesus Christ, and has not allowed this to remain as an idle theory, but has made it a practical reality wherever its influence has extended.

Third contrast:—The practical character of Christian moral teaching forms a most striking contrast to that of the philosophers. That of Christianity was a life; that of philosophy was a speculation. While the philosopher declared that the end of his science was practical, we do not find a single individual whose convictions were sufficiently powerful to induce him to become a preacher of morality to others. But the teaching of Christianity has warmed the hearts of millions, so as not only to impel them to attempt to regulate their conduct by its precepts, but to devote themselves to the work of bringing the outward world under its influences, and to exhaust themselves in efforts to ameliorate its condition. This is a subject which is deeply worthy of our meditation.

History presents us with an embodiment of this contrast in a very striking form. More than a century after the advent of Christianity the most eminent professor of the Stoic philo-

sophy mounted the imperial throne of the Roman Empire. This event gave to Philosophy a singular opportunity of exerting a mighty influence on mankind, if she possessed the principles of vitality in her system. She for once got possession of the most absolute power which the world has ever seen, to wield it at her pleasure. The character of its possessor was perhaps the most estimable, and his private life the purest, which philosophy has ever presented to the world. Yet the amiable philosopher persecuted the Christian Church. He might have done this from a sense of duty. But it is an undeniable fact that he has coldly scoffed at the sufferings of the martyrs. After his wife's death he even lived with a mistress. But what did the philosopher who wielded the power of the mightiest empire effect as a monarch? It has been said that his philosophy exerted a beneficial influence on the legislation of the empire. Be it so. Yet he created nothing. The reign of decadence had begun, and his hand was powerless to arrest it. He created nothing politically, socially, morally, or religiously. His personal influence perished with him in his grave. He allowed his son to succeed him—a monster of iniquity—who speedily destroyed the small remnants of his father's work. Yet

the abstract morality which he professed was the most elevated in the ancient world. If we compare the results effected by the philosophic moralist on the imperial throne, after his long reign, with those effected by the Apostle Paul, less than a century earlier, who terminated his long career of struggles and of suffering by the lictor's axe, the contrast between the results of the moral teaching of Christianity and philosophy needs no better illustration.

Fourth contrast:—All the moral principles and precepts of Christianity are true to the great principles of universal morality [3]. No false ones, nor a single vice, have received the commendation of one of its writers. So much cannot be said for a single moral treatise of the ancient world. However high may be its general character, we are sure to find some principle or precept which modern feeling cannot help condemning as involving defective morality [4]. In not a few instances the purest moralists have tolerated practices essentially immoral, which it will be better to allude to, and not to name [5].

[3] See chapters viii.—xv. inclusive.

[4] See Plato's Republic and Symposium.

[5] The reader who is curious on this point may see frequent allusions to them in the Satires of Juvenal.

Fifth contrast:—The moral teaching of Christianity is wholly free from the spirit of one-sidedness which characterized every system of the ancient world. It appeals to our entire moral being, not to any exclusive portion of it. It recognizes that man consists of body and soul, of reason and conscience, of feelings, affections, and passions, which, although one is more elevated than another, yet together make up our common humanity. To each and every one of these, in their due proportion, Christianity has assigned a recognized place in her teaching.

Now this breadth of view is wanting in the schools of ancient thought. Even the widest of them ignored portions of our mental constitution. It not unfrequently happened that this onesidedness of philosophy was conspicuous in proportion to the elevation of its tone. It fastened on some one portion of our intellectual and moral being, and ignored all besides. The consequence of this was, that the most elevated systems of philosophy endeavoured to extirpate the feelings and affections in man, and to deal with him as a being possessed of nothing but pure reason. A morality erected on such principles failed, because it was only fit for a philosophic god, and was untrue to human

nature. The Stoic philosophy exhibits a striking example of this. While it rightly maintained that disinterestedness was of the essence of elevated morality, it refused to recognize the principle of reasonable self-love. Such a conception may be grand, but it is not human; for in man reasonable self-love is as much a part of his nature as a sense of duty. It is a remarkable fact, that in proportion as philosophy was not onesided, it was frigid. Christianity united catholicity with warmth.

Sixth contrast:—The most remarkable distinction between the moral teaching of Christianity and that of the ancient world is the elevated place which the former has assigned to the milder and more unobtrusive virtues. The entire moral teaching of the ancient world assigned the highest rank to those qualities which, for want of a better name, I must designate as the heroical virtues, such as courage, magnanimity, patriotism, and the entire class of virtues whose bearing is more or less political. No less certain is it that Christianity has assigned the highest rank to the milder qualities of the mind, and has consecrated them as the special fruits of the Spirit of God. The chief of these are humility, meekness, mercy, purity, a peaceful disposition, patience, gentleness,

kindness, goodness, forgiveness, and love, the bond of perfection. The assigning to the milder virtues the elevated place which previous teaching gave to the heroic and political ones, has amounted to nothing less than a complete revolution in moral teaching.

I do not assert that none of these virtues were recognized by ancient moralists. Some of them unquestionably were. Others, such as humility in its Christian sense, had no place at all. It was confounded with baseness of spirit. But the entire class was subordinate. This was inevitable from the unsoundness of the basis on which philosophic teaching was erected. Its political aspect led it to magnify the grander qualities of the mind[6]. The Stoical deification of human nature imparted to its morality a tone of superciliousness and pride. It taught that the virtuous man was the equal if not the superior of the gods.

We need not in this place inquire whether Christianity was right in this aspect of her teaching, though I cannot help remarking that since she has thus taught, it has secured the approbation of the wisest and the best of men. It is sufficient to note the fact.

[6] See Aristotle's description of the "magnificent" and "magnanimous" man, Ethics, Book IV.

The difference underlies every portion of it. Not that it disregards the heroic virtues. This has been falsely asserted. She has a vast array of heroes. Her noble army of martyrs will contrast, in point of heroic self-devotion and endurance, with the highest types of the ancient world. Her principle of self-sacrifice has produced results compared with which those which have been produced by patriotism and philosophic self-abnegation sink into nothingness. Still the fact remains that she has assigned the highest place, and pronounced the greatest blessedness on those qualities which I have named, and declared that they constitute the temper which shall flourish and be everlastingly rewarded in the kingdom of God.

The revolution of thought which has been brought about by Christianity in this respect is one of profound significance. The question at once forces itself on the mind, What is its origin? How came it there? The tone of ancient thought in this respect is one which is congenial to the natural bent of the human mind. Whether a profounder philosophy might have discovered the unsoundness of the prevalent principles, and have reversed the order of the estimation of the virtues, may admit of dis-

pute. But we are saved from the necessity of discussing the question, for it is admitted that the founders of Christianity were not philosophers. Yet the fact remains that they have recognized what the profoundest thinkers failed to do. It is evident, therefore, that they must have been men of great originality of mind, for they succeeded in emancipating themselves from the whole current of previous opinio n However we may account for this, it is evident that there is one theory with which the fact is absolutely inconsistent — viz. that of my opponents, that the story of the Gospels, with which this moral teaching is indelibly interwoven, could have been elaborated by successions of well-meaning but credulous enthusiasts.

Seventh contrast :—The writers of Christianity have depicted the ideal of morality in the life and actions of a living man, and constituted it the centre of their moral power. This forms the most striking contrast between the teaching of Christianity and any thing which has preceded it, or even followed it. No ancient system possesses any thing parallel to it, or even the smallest similarity to it. The perfection of the character I shall consider in a distinct chapter. It is sufficient for the

present stage of the argument to observe that such an ideal is to be found in the Gospels, and that it cannot be found in any system of teaching prior to the advent.

It may be objected that ancient philosophy occasionally endeavoured to embody its teaching in an ideal character. But in such a character it never intended to go beyond the partial exhibition of one or more of its virtues. It never professed to exhibit one which should constitute a perfect delineation of moral perfection, or which was a faithful portraiture of a man who actually existed. Such as they were, they were both partial and impressed with evident marks of imperfection.

But the great character of the Gospels is not the delineation of a set of partial virtues, but of absolute moral perfection. It is not presented to us as an artificial creation, but in the person and actions of an historical man. He exhibits the perfection of morality in every act and thought, without a single stain of imperfection. It is depicted in the actions of a life which the writers tell us was no creation of the imagination, but one which men saw and witnessed. It is exhibited over an extensive sphere of action, and contains the utmost variety of circumstances. This character, whether historical

or fictitious, is one to which ancient philosophy presents us with nothing similar.

But, in addition to these points of contrast, the character of Jesus Christ is the portraiture of one which unites a human character with a divine one. The conception of it belongs to the order of the supernatural, while at the same time it is intensely human. But as far as the popular religions had any moral aspect at all, they were justly repudiated by every system of philosophic morality. No philosopher could have ever taught the imitation of the gods or heroes as a duty; but the writers of the New Testament have imparted not only a human but a divine aspect to the morality exhibited in the person of Jesus Christ, and every where proclaim the duty of making Him the subject of our imitation. All and every part of this character forms the most essential portion of the moral teaching of the New Testament. It imparts to it a harmony and a unity; and without it, its teaching loses all cohesion. In this point of view it must be confessed to be absolutely original.

Eighth contrast:—Christianity contains not only a system of moral teaching, but it professes to bring to bear on our nature a new moral and spiritual influence suited to its im-

perfections and its wants. The need of this Philosophy most clearly discerned, but the power itself it professed itself wholly unable to supply.

The highest display of moral power that Christianity brings to bear on the human mind is made to centre in the person of its Founder. It is no theory, but a fact, that the life and actions of Jesus Christ have acted with a power, and spoken with a might to the human heart, compared with which all other motives have been feebleness. Even the greatest opponents of Christianity cannot deny that the mighty influence which has been exerted by the character of Christ has been the most elevating and the most softening which has ever been brought to bear on human nature. At the same time, it has been the most powerful. There is nothing like it either in the ancient or the modern world.

Ninth contrast:—The teaching of Christianity has brought to bear on the mind of man another mighty moral force. Jesus Christ has concentrated the whole strength of the religious element in man on his moral being. Through it He makes the most powerful appeals to the conscience in favour of holiness, and arms it with a power previously unknown. No less certain is

it that His teaching uses the entire relationship of God to man—as his Creator, his Father, his Benefactor, and his Judge—as a mighty moral and spiritual influence. The contrast between this portion of the teaching of Christianity and that of ancient philosophy is complete. Instead of uniting religion and morality, the philosophers effected their utter and entire separation. The character of their religions rendered this absolutely necessary, if they were to teach any thing that was good or pure. But, at the same time, they deprived themselves of that moral power of which they confessed and deeply felt the need.

Such are some of the most striking contrasts presented by the teaching of Christianity and that of previous thought. Its originality is one which is pre-eminently marked. The present position of my argument does not lead me to the direct discussion of its origin. It is a fact, however, that it has exerted a mightier influence on the mind of man than all philosophy united. Such a fact is inconsistent with the theory that it has been invented by self-conscious impostors. It is equally so with that of modern unbelievers, that its elaboration is the result of the action of a succession of credulous enthusiasts, gradually evolved by causes purely natural.

CHAPTER VI.

THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF SEPARATING THE SUPERNATURAL FROM THE MORAL ELEMENTS CONTAINED IN THE GOSPELS.

THE person of Jesus Christ constitutes the centre of the moral teaching of Christianity. His character contains in itself its very ideal of moral perfection. It also constitutes the great spiritual power by which it acts on the world. Before I consider the perfection of this character, it will be necessary to determine of what it consists.

An attempt has been made to solve this question by trying to effect a separation between the supernatural and moral elements which are contained in the Gospels. The theory is, that the whole of the supernatural portions of the character is unhistorical, while many of them are willing to accept certain portions of the moral teaching as historically true. Is the separation of the one from the other capable of being justified by

the principles of sound criticism? or will the residuum present us with an historical reality?

The following considerations interpose insuperable difficulties in the way of such a separation.

First, the portraiture of Jesus Christ, as it is depicted in the Gospels, is not that of a character which has been artificially delineated by the persons who composed them. This is a consideration of the highest importance. Of what, then, does it consist?

The portraiture is the combined result of the actions and of the teaching which has been ascribed to Jesus Christ, each of which stands in the closest relation to the other. It is hardly possible to over-estimate the importance of this consideration in the controversy. The most supernatural portions of the character present us with the same moral aspects as the ordinary ones. Different aspects of it shine out in His separate actions; but a full perception of its greatness and moral beauty is the effect of a complete survey of the complicated whole. Jesus Christ in His different actions is exhibited as benevolent, holy, dignified, self-sacrificing, humble; but the character does not consist of one or two qualities only, but

composes a unity that results from the blending together of its various parts, which are mutually fitted one into the other. That this should have grown out of the accidental placing together of a multitude of fabulous stories composed by different authors is one of the most inconceivable of suppositions.

Secondly, the larger portion of the Gospels consists of a supernatural element, with which the moral teaching is most intimately connected. If the one be separated from the other, the proportions of the character will be destroyed, and the moral precepts themselves will assume a substantially different aspect.

Thirdly, if the supernatural portions be eliminated from the Gospels, a large portion of the moral teaching must undergo a similar fate. The one bears the closest relation, and directly grows out of the other. If the one is false, large portions of the other cannot be true. Besides, it by no means follows if a narrative contains a supernatural element united with one that does not rise beyond the level of the natural, that if the former be eliminated, the latter will contain a substratum of true history. Notable instances of the truth of this are in the legendary histories of Greece and Rome. After the supernatural has been struck out of them, the

residuum is far from constituting a solid foundation of historic fact.

Fourthly, the propounders of this theory have overlooked a most important consideration. They have proceeded to act on the supposition that if they can eliminate from the narrative the miracles, strictly so called, they will succeed in divesting the character of its supernatural element. The truth is, there are two supernatural elements contained in the Gospels. The one of these consists of the miracles wrought on man and on external nature; the other is the entire person and work of Christ Himself, which essentially belong to the region of the supernatural. The elimination of the one by no means includes that of the other.

This my opponents have only partially perceived. The fact is, that the supernatural belongs no less to the moral than to the physical universe, and there is no cutting or paring away of the miraculous element which will bring the person of Jesus Christ, as it is portrayed in the Gospels, within the regions of the natural. Let us take the processes employed by Renan as an example. He ruthlessly removes the whole of the miraculous stories as unhistorical, simply because they are miraculous.

But when he has done this, he has still to encounter certain aspects of the character of Jesus Christ and His moral teaching which obstinately refuse to come within the limits of the natural. To reduce them to this order, he is compelled to have recourse to a multitude of unphilosophical theories and simple inventions; but he is still confronted by a Jesus who belongs to an order of things different from the mere natural order of the moral world.

I admit that the Jesus of Renan and of other writers of kindred schools is a very different person from the Jesus of the Evangelist. Still He is, to all intents and purposes, a moral miracle. This is practically admitted by the author when he proclaims Him to have been the greatest man who has ever lived; and that, in all probability, Nature will never produce a greater. If a man greater than the greatest of men was produced in the moral atmosphere of the Judaism of the first thirty years of the first century, such a person, growing up under these influences to such greatness, is an exception to the moral laws of the universe, and constitutes a moral miracle; or, in other words, belongs to the regions of the supernatural. His existence is as great a violation of the one class of laws as the cure of a man, born

blind, by a word is of those of physical nature.

It follows, therefore, that the striking out of the miraculous stories from the Gospels by no means frees us from the supernatural element that is contained in them. This can only be accomplished by reducing Jesus Christ to the level of a great Rabbi of the year 30. It is quite possible to assert that He was nothing more. But this is not only to destroy the Gospels, but it leaves us once more in the presence of another form of the supernatural. If Jesus Christ was nothing more than such a Rabbi, why has His influence exceeded that of all great Rabbis united? On such a supposition, the influence that has been exerted by Him in the creation of Christianity, and through it on the world, is one which transcends all the known laws of the moral world.

Fifthly, the miraculous narrative presents precisely the same moral aspect as the other portions of the Gospels. The truth is, that both the one and the other are indelibly stamped with the impress of the same moral character. The moral glories of Jesus Christ shone forth most conspicuously in the miraculous actions which are assigned to Him. In them He bears the same aspect of loveliness,

benevolence, goodness, humility, and untiring energy in doing good as He does in the other portions of the narrative. How, then, were they made to fit into it? Whence the perfect harmony? How comes it to pass that the inventors of the numerous fictions have not introduced a foreign element into it? There is, therefore, nothing gained in ascribing one portion of it to an historical Jesus, and a larger portion of it to a mythical invention. The originators of the fables must have been animated by the same divine morality as He who uttered the discourses.

Sixthly, the removal of the supernatural element from the character of Christ deprives Christianity of those mighty moral forces by which it has penetrated to the depths of the human heart, i. e. it deprives Christian teaching of its essential peculiarity. I conclude, therefore, that the moral teaching contained in the Gospels, and the main facts of their supernatural elements, must stand or fall together.

CHAPTER VII.

THE IDEAL OF MORAL PERFECTION AS IT IS EXHIBITED IN THE PERSON AND WORK OF JESUS CHRIST.

THE entire moral teaching of the New Testament is made to centre in the person of its great Teacher. This constitutes a peculiarity which is to be found in no other systems whatever. The teachings of Socrates, of Plato, of Aristotle, of Zeno, of Seneca, of Aurelius, of Zoroaster, and of all the moralists or the philosophers who ever lived, were quite independent of their own persons. If the whole of their history had perished, their systems would be unaffected by it. But if the same fate had overtaken the person and work of Jesus Christ, the morality of Christianity would lose all cohesion.

This is a circumstance worthy of our profoundest attention. The idea of founding a system of moral teaching on a living person must be owned to be one profoundly original. I think that it can be shown to be in accordance with a sound philosophy. But not only is

this the case; but the entire character of Christ, and the parts of which it is composed, can be shown to be constructed with the most exquisite skill and the most faultless perfection. If this can be established, it is evident that the theory which asserts that the contents of the Gospels have been invented by a multitude of credulous enthusiasts will not stand the test of reason.

The morality of Christianity has a threefold connexion with the historical life of its Founder.

First, His person imparts its vitality to the entire teaching of the New Testament, and constitutes the chief of the moral and spiritual powers possessed by Christianity. This I shall consider in a subsequent chapter.

Secondly, the historic life of Christ contains the morality of Christianity in its ideal perfection. It constitutes that fountain of living morality which assigns a definite meaning to all the principles and precepts found in the New Testament, and renders them suitable for every age and condition of man. This aspect of the moral teaching of the New Testament I propose to consider in the present chapter.

Thirdly, it contains a great body of principles and precepts laid down in the New Testament,

which bear a distinct reference to the historic life of Christ as the source from whence they flow. These I shall consider in subsequent chapters.

I now draw attention to the perfection of moral teaching as it is exhibited in the person of Jesus Christ.

First, let us examine its basis.

The whole character, as it is depicted in the Gospels, presents us with a marvellous union of the human with the divine. Taking our present Gospels as they stand, nothing can be clearer than that the character is conceived of as the manifestation of a supernatural being exhibiting itself in the life and actions of a man. This is in a sense admitted even by Renan, even after he has removed, as he supposes, the entire miraculous element out of the Gospels. While he asserts that all men are equally related to God as Jesus Christ was, he admits that no other man equally realized the closeness of that relationship.

The contrast between our Lord and the Old Testament prophets puts this point in a striking light. In the act of prophetic inspiration they exhibit the closest union which was then conceivable between deity and humanity. But the distinction between the prophets' own con-

sciousness and that of deity is absolute, and is never confounded. They do not even approach to fusion. It is expressed by the invariable formula, "Thus saith the Lord," and other kindred expressions, when delivering a divine utterance. But Jesus Christ in the Gospels exhibits no consciousness of this separation[1]. His knowledge is derived from no source external to His own mind. The expression, "I say unto you," i. e. the depths of His own consciousness, is the one only source of His divine utterances.

It is necessary to bear this in mind in considering the ideal of moral perfection as it is exhibited in the person of Jesus Christ. Unless we observe that it is an exhibition of the supernatural within the regions of the natural, we shall miss its entire significance. Equally important is it to observe the uniform

[1] A few passages in St. John's Gospel which the modern school of critical unbelief asserts to have been forged as late as A.D. 170, for the purpose of glorifying our Lord, have the appearance of taking a somewhat lower view of this subject. I apprehend that when the whole of them are examined and compared, the legitimate conclusion will be that our Lord intended by them to assert, in opposition to His opponents, that His entire teaching is in absolute conformity with the mind of the Father. He expressly asserts His own inherent knowledge, John iii. 11—13.

propriety with which it is carried out through all the details of the narrative.

Secondly, the character of Jesus Christ is an exhibition of uniform greatness: though placed in every variety of situation, one single trait of littleness cannot be found in it. From this the greatest of ideal or actual men are never free. Throughout the Gospels our Lord is depicted as one in whom the sense of royalty was innate. He is always self-possessed; always equal to the occasion without an effort. The feeling of inherent worthiness is absolutely natural to Him. It has been said that Christianity does not teach self-respect; but the character of Jesus Christ is the perfection of dignity.

Thirdly, if we contemplate it in the aspect of greatness only, we shall entirely miss its significance. Its uniform greatness is invariably vested in a robe of the most exquisite tenderness and humility. I fully admit that, if we take a partial view of the subject, there is no character, either in fiction or in history, which is equally arrogant as that of Jesus Christ. His pretensions are boundless, and they are only to be justified in virtue of the divine element contained in it. Yet this self-assertion, great as it is, is free from one single mark of haughtiness or pride. Its essence is

exalted dignity united with undoubted right; and the whole is robed with profound humility, softness, and sympathy. It uniformly exhibits the tenderest appreciation of the difficulties and the weaknesses of others. It sympathizes with every aspect and condition of humanity. Conscious, as He is, of the most exalted dignity, there is no action too humble for Him to stoop to, in the work of doing good. The greatness of the character is nowhere more conspicuous than in His greatest acts of humiliation. Of all characters Jesus Christ is the greatest, the most accessible, and the most mildly forbearing.

These traits are brought out in a greater or less degree in every narrative of the Gospels. But as this union of two such opposite poles of character can be found nowhere else than in that of Jesus Christ, I will refer to two delineations of it, as instances of the exquisite perfection with which it is depicted. The first is the account in St. John of our Lord washing His disciples' feet. Let the entire delineation be carefully studied, and dull must be the heart which is not arrested by its deep pathos. The second is the great scene in St. Matthew's Gospel which depicts the Son of Man seated on the throne of His glory. How divine is the King! How royal are His

kingly acts! Yet how intensely human is His environment! how supreme is His condescension—"I was an hungred, and ye gave Me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took Me in; I was naked, and ye clothed Me," &c. "Lord, when saw we Thee an hungred, and fed Thee? Verily, I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye did it unto Me." This presents us with the most perfect delineation of majesty united with condescension, and the mildest aspects of human feeling which can be found in literature. The human and the divine combine with one another with exquisite perfection.

Yet it has been asserted by a high authority, "that magnanimity, high-mindedness, and pure dignity, must be learned from the purely human, and not from the religious side of our education."

Fourthly, the morality of absolute unselfishness is perfectly exhibited in the character of Jesus Christ. Not one action attributed to Him in the Gospels can be assigned to conscious self-love as its impelling motive. This is the more remarkable when we consider the self-assertion of the character. In ordinary men this is only another form of self-love. But

of this the character of Jesus Christ is wholly devoid. On the contrary, throughout the Gospels He is consistently portrayed as impelled by an overwhelming love and compassion for others, so powerful as entirely to absorb every consideration about self. His single vocation is that of doing good. Other men have exhibited great degrees of self-abnegation; but the great peculiarity of the character of Jesus Christ is, that one stain of selfishness cannot be discovered in it.

Fifthly, closely connected with the foregoing trait of our Lord's character, is its exhibition of absolute obedience to the will of God, and His intense desire to make that will the universal law of man. The supreme object of His life is described by Himself as, "to do the will of Him that sent Him, and to finish His work." In no other human being who has actually existed, or who has been depicted by the imagination, is the coincidence of his will with that of God so absolute and entire. The intensity of Christ's zeal for the honour of God, united as it is with the most entire self-abnegation, is most striking. Under personal insult He is quiescent. When His Father's honour is in question, His disciples were made to remember by His actions that it had been

written of Him, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up."

Sixthly, the character of Jesus Christ presents us with the embodiment of the conception of absolute benevolence; at the same time it unites with it another opposite pole of character, the perfection of absolute holiness. This is a union which is in the highest degree difficult to effect. In ordinary good and holy men the one of these attributes exercises a neutralizing influence on the other. The highly benevolent man is wanting in some of the sterner aspects of the attribute of holiness. He who possesses these latter is deficient in that softness of character which is an ingredient of benevolence. In our Lord these opposite poles of character exist in perfect unison.

The entire life of Christ is an exhibition of benevolence without limits. His intense desire to do good supplied in Him the place of every inferior stimulus to action. His sympathy with distress was so great as to be described by an Evangelist, in the language of an Old Testament prophet, as "Himself taking our infirmities, and bearing our sicknesses." But as moral evil is a far greater calamity than physical suffering, the spectacle of it is represented as

capable of acting as a stimulus on His exhausted physical nature to fresh exertions for its relief. The sight of it makes Him forget all His weariness. He, first of men, taught that the work of doing good, even in actions which would be designated as menial, and the current of ancient morality would have pronounced in a great man degrading, is one which is absolutely divine; and that it knows no limits of race, or party, or condition. Benevolence was a rare virtue in the ancient world; and where it existed at all, it was confined within the narrowest limits. But with our Lord the duty was coextensive with man in need. He first proclaimed that love to enemies is a duty. Of all disinterested efforts to cure man's moral and spiritual diseases, He is unquestionably the Founder, and the first and the greatest of Missionaries.

This picture of our Lord's character is worthy of the greatest attention, because, prior to His appearance, it was absolutely unique. I have already referred to the views entertained on this point by the philosophic schools; and that the idea of going out into the highways and hedges of humanity and expending themselves in self-sacrificing efforts, to effect man's moral and spiritual improvement, was one entirely alien

to their whole line of thought. In this work Jesus Christ is the first and greatest of self-sacrificers, devoting to it His entire life, and surrendering it for the purpose of accomplishing it. This is especially that portion of His character which has acted with that mighty force on mankind, compared with which any thing which has preceded or followed it has been as nothing. During the eighteen centuries which have elapsed since this life of pure self-sacrifice was exhibited before the eyes of men, the numbers of that army who, in imitation of Him, animated by His love, and supported by His strength, have devoted themselves to the disinterested work of doing good, have probably outnumbered those who have fought on the battle-field. Of this army of spiritual heroes, Jesus Christ is the Founder, the Leader, and the King.

Seventhly, let us now survey the opposite pole of our Lord's character, the perfection of its holiness. The unapproachable greatness of the character of Jesus Christ consists not only in the separate parts which compose it, but in the delicate blending of these into a complicated whole.

No more difficult problem can be presented to the mind than to conceive of the two opposite

poles of character, benevolence and holiness, as harmoniously uniting in the same person. The notion conveyed by perfect holiness is that of absolute purity, and complete abhorrence of every form of moral evil. The desire that the wilful wrong-doer should receive something in accordance with his desert is a constituent portion of the conception of absolute holiness. Pure benevolence, on the contrary, contemplates moral evil with an intense desire for its cure. Imperfectly as these qualities exist in man, they yet interfere with each other's action. Where the one is strongly developed, the other sinks into a subordinate place. The benevolent and the mild are not sternly holy. The sternly holy are deficient in benevolence.

The whole aspect of modern thought is an illustration of the difficulty of effecting this union. Its tendency is to resolve all the attributes of God into that of simple benevolence. In it the holiness and justice of God, as a moral Governor, sink into a subordinate place. It is thought to be inconsistent with the divine benevolence that God should be the punisher of sin. This line of thought is common among those theorists who reject Christianity. On the same principles many of them are compelled to assert that moral and

physical evil are either transitory, or an aspect of good. The assumption of absolute benevolence in God is felt to be inconsistent with the existence in Him of the sterner aspects of holiness.

We discern the same principle acting in society. In proportion as its benevolent feelings are excited, moral evil is contemplated less and less with an eye of holy reprobation. A theory is widely spread, that society has no right to inflict punishment on evil-doers, except with a view to their reformation, even on murderers. Views of this kind are indications of the general tendencies of thought, and proceed from the difficulty of conceiving of two opposite poles of character, such as benevolence and holiness, acting in unison, so as not to interfere with each other.

I am aware that a question may be raised whether these sterner aspects of holiness form a portion of absolute moral perfection. I reply, that the moral nature of man is so formed as to yield an unquestionable testimony to their truth. It is impossible for a holy man, unless he does violence to the primary principles of his mental constitution, when he witnesses the most aggravated forms of wickedness, to avoid wishing that the evil-doer may be requited in some degree in accordance with his deeds.

This feeling arises quite irrespective of any sense of the wrong which has been done to society, and as the instinctive verdict of an unsophisticated conscience. Its absence implies a deficiency of moral sensibility.

Now the character of Jesus Christ exhibits the conceptions of perfect benevolence and holiness in harmonious union. Nothing can be more complete than its separation from every form of moral evil. Not only is He described as absolutely void of it, but the conscious presentation of the temptation to commit it meets with His sternest reprobation. Yet towards moral evil, when it has not taken complete possession of the will, He uniformly displays the tenderest compassion. When it appears in the form of self-conscious hypocrisy, He encounters it with an awful sternness. But this sternness is uniformly represented as succeeded by an outburst of the tenderest compassion.

Eighthly, this portion of our subject requires that we should survey another aspect of our Lord's character. The evangelists have again and again represented Him as capable of being angry. Against these manifestations of anger on the part of Jesus Christ my opponents have directed their most formid-

able objections. They aver that they are evidences of imperfection and deterioration. I reply, that the capability of being moved to anger by certain aspects of moral evil is an essential ingredient in absolute holiness of character.

(1) I observe that the feeling of anger is an essential portion of the moral constitution of man. Its proper object is aggravated and wilful wickedness. It is simply impossible for a holy man to witness the most aggravated forms of moral evil without the feeling of righteous indignation being excited by them. So far would the absence of this feeling be a virtue, that it would simply imply absence of the perception of the difference between right and wrong. To say that the most aggravated forms of evil are to excite no other feeling than benevolence [2], is to assume the point at issue. Whether anger be justifiable or otherwise we can only learn from the study of the moral constitution of man.

In ordinary men the usual excitement to anger is not a sense of outraged holiness, but of violated self-love. This it is which converts a holy feeling into a sinful one. When it is

[2] I allude to that class of writers who affirm that benevolence pure and simple is the only worthy attribute of Deity.

inflamed by the passions it becomes a high form of moral evil.

(2) The anger of Jesus Christ was never once called into action by a sense of violated self-love. To assume that it was, is simply to take for granted the point at issue. Our only sources of information on the subject are the Gospels themselves. In them it is uniformly described as excited by the presence of the highest forms of moral evil, or by an attempt to impede Him in some act of self-sacrifice in doing the work committed to Him by His Father. The form of evil which pre-eminently aroused it was hypocrisy. The next exciting cause was moral obduracy. In every instance the cause is absolutely unconnected with self-love.

Of this, the rebuke to Peter constitutes a most remarkable example. Nothing can be more contrasted with the violated self-interest or the offended self-esteem which is the exciting cause of anger in ordinary men. The peculiar force of the temptation consisted in Peter's love for Him. It was addressed to His own self-love to induce Him to forego His great act of self-sacrifice. What if it had succeeded? Through the instrumentality of the tenderest of the affections sinfulness would have been introduced into the mind of perfection.

In this case, it is undeniable that the anger of Jesus Christ displays itself in the most absolute form of unselfishness. Such was its uniform character. Insult or personal injury never once produced the feeling in Him. The Gospels represent Him as exposed to circumstances of the greatest provocation, and armed with power to crush His foes. But He continues unmoved; He even expressly excludes sins committed against Himself from that class of offences which are incapable of forgiveness. The extremity of agony forces from Him no one reviling word, but only those of the tenderest compassion. The anger of Jesus Christ was, therefore, consistent with the most absolute unselfishness, and was not a deterioration in His character, caused by His having been soured by disappointment towards the close of His career at the ill-success of the mission which He had undertaken, and at the opposition which He encountered. If so, it must have been the result of some form of self-love; but of the existence of this, not only is there no trace in the Gospels, but it contradicts all the evidence which we possess. His anger formed an essential portion of the holiness of His mind, the stern reprobation with which it contemplated the aggravated forms of sin.

The assertion that our Lord's anger is a proof that, towards the end of His course, He had lost the original sweetness of His character, is a pure assumption destitute of one atom of evidence. What is more, it is inconsistent with all the facts recorded in the Gospels, and as they constitute all we know about Him, it is absurd to supply their place by pure creations of the imagination. At the close of His ministry He denounced the Pharisees. This we know on the testimony of the Gospels; but the same authority makes it evident that at no period of His ministry was the intense mildness, benevolence, compassion, and self-abnegation of His character more remarkably displayed than during its closing scenes. The whole history of the last week of our Lord's life contains the most marvellous exhibitions of the softer portions of His character. Even the denunciations of Pharisaic hypocrisy are followed by an outburst of tenderness which is unexampled in literature: "How often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not."

The objection, therefore, falls to the ground. It can only be sustained by first assuming, that it is inconsistent with a perfect character

to be capable of being aroused to anger by the presence of aggravated wickedness. On the contrary, such a feeling is an essential ingredient of absolute holiness.

The Gospels, therefore, have succeeded in depicting in the person of Jesus Christ the most perfect benevolence acting in unison with holiness in its sterner aspects. In Him the equilibrium between these two opposite poles of character is never disturbed. But we have not yet considered the mode in which the opposite demands of these two attributes are finally satisfied. What, then, is the mode of their union? The entire New Testament replies, In His self-sacrificing death. Holiness required a vindication of the moral government of the universe. Benevolence required that the supremest effort should be made for the recovery of the sinner. To effect both, Jesus Christ gave His life. By His act of final voluntary self-sacrifice benevolence and holiness have effected the most perfect union in His person. This has constituted Him the mightiest spiritual power which has ever acted on the mind of man.

Ninthly, nor is the mildness of the character less remarkable. Consider that most inopportune contest for superiority among the disciples

at the very eve of the Passion, and the numerous provoking instances of their stupidity, and the imperturbability of the replies. Even the traitor Judas is received by Him with a calm solemnity after his act of treachery had been denounced in terms of awfulness. Closely connected with this feature of His character is the uniform self-possession of our Lord. Of this we have the most striking exhibition throughout the whole of the scenes of the Passion. Never once, throughout the whole Gospels, is He carried beyond Himself. There He stands, solitary and alone; mild, meek, patient, and always equal to the emergency. The self-command of Jesus Christ is absolutely perfect.

I may here notice another trait closely connected with the one which I have just mentioned. As His self-command is perfect, so the general elevation of the character is uniform; it is entirely destitute of what we call effort. Other men, when they want to raise themselves to a high level, have to strain their powers. Thoughts enter them which they cannot find words to express. Of this we find a remarkable instance in the apostle Paul. But this is never the case with Jesus Christ. His mind is always up to the

requisite elevation. He is also never hurried away by the overwhelming influence of passion. In this the character of Christ stands contrasted with every other in the Bible.

Tenthly, the character of Christ presents us with the most perfect union of patience under suffering in unison with power. In ordinary men these two things are incompatible; but it forms a fundamental conception of the Christ of the Gospels.

My opponents admit that the miracles recorded in the Gospels are sufficiently numerous. Our Lord is uniformly represented as possessed of a superhuman power, yet He never once uses it in His own defence, or for the purpose of crushing His enemies. This power He is described as possessing not only throughout His entire ministry, but during the dark hour of His Passion. He has only to pray to His Father, and rescue is at hand. Yet no provocation or suffering once tempts Him to have recourse to it. This peculiar trait cannot better be expressed than in the words of St. Peter: "When He was reviled, He reviled not again. When He suffered, He threatened not, but committed Himself to Him who judgeth righteously."

Eleventhly, this last aspect of the character

is founded on another important trait depicted in the Gospels, the coincidence of the will of Jesus Christ with that of God, whether in action or in suffering. Holiness in Jesus Christ is represented, not merely as an act of obedience to the moral law engraven on the heart, the practice of which immediately conduces to our highest happiness; but as obedience to a higher moral law, existing in God, which frequently requires the sacrifice of self. The holiest of men feel that this law demands a surrender of present feelings to the requirement of higher principles, the highest of which is the perfect will of God.

Finite differs from infinite perfection; and finite holiness must, from the nature of the case, be short of that which is infinite. There exists in the holiest of men a higher will which seeks coincidence with the perfect will of God; and a lower one, connected with our love of self, which struggles against the sufferings with which the realization of the higher one may be attended. Perfect holiness requires that this lower will should be brought into coexistence with the higher, and the higher with that of God.

These points are brought out with matchless force in the Jesus of the Gospels. The

intensity of His desire to fulfil the divine will is described by Himself as standing in the same place in Him as food does to ordinary men. The form of holiness which the Gospels ascribe to Jesus Christ is the highest form of created holiness, viz. the holiness of a perfectly holy man. He is not depicted as insensible to the force of temptation; nor as insensible to the suffering through which the divine will was to be realized, nor as submitting to it without a struggle. If the authors of the Gospels had attended to the advice of objectors, they would have depicted Jesus Christ as always submitting Himself to the will of God without a struggle; but they would have drawn a character untrue to the philosophy and the facts of human nature.

In the case of Jesus Christ, His sufferings and death was a requirement of the higher will of God. Its fulfilment could only be brought about by a supreme act of self-sacrifice. Against these the lower will is described as struggling; but such is its perfection, that the result of the struggle is, that it falls into coincidence with the perfect will of God. This is brought out with matchless power in the history of the Passion, especially of the agony in the garden, which, let unbelievers object to

it on mere abstract principles as they will, forms the greatest exhibition of holiness which has ever been conceived of by man. The struggle is no proof of imperfection, but that the sufferer was human. Of the noble army of self-sacrificers, Jesus Christ is the Leader and the King.

The aspect of our Lord as a self-sacrificer is that which imparts vitality to the moral teaching of the New Testament. He commands the performance of no duty which He has not Himself performed. He demands no act of self-sacrifice to which He Himself has not submitted. He requires from His followers no struggle in which the contemplation of His own divine person does not give them strength to conquer. The duty of self-sacrifice, as it is taught in the New Testament, is that principle which enables us to adapt all the more definite portions of its moral teaching to the ever-varying requirements of human nature. Whenever a doubt or a difficulty arises as to their application, it is immediately solved by asking ourselves the question, What does the love of Jesus Christ require at my hands? The new commandment of "Love one another as I have loved you," centred as it is in the person of Christ, is the very spirit of life which

communicates a freshness and adaptation to the entire teaching of the New Testament. Christ, the great Self-sacrificer, is the Captain of the army of Christian heroes, whether they be men or women, who have devoted themselves to the work of ameliorating the condition of human nature.

Such are some of the leading traits of the character of Him who forms the centre of the moral teaching of the New Testament. It constitutes a great whole; but it consists of a multitude of parts which fit into one another with a faultless perfection. Their mutual adaptation creates the great unity. Is it conceivable that this grand portraiture has resulted from the placing together of a multitude of fictions? To ask us to believe this is to invite us not only to renounce all rational conviction, but also, under pretence of getting rid of the supernatural, to believe in a fact which is a greater contradiction of the laws of nature than all the miracles by which revelation has been attested.

If the character of Jesus Christ is historically true, it rationally accounts for the might with which Christianity has acted on the human mind. If it is a fiction, it follows that the greatest power which has ever been brought

to bear on man, and which has exerted the mightiest influence, is founded on a lie.

The moral elements in the character of Christ constitute that which renders the teaching of Christianity the adequate guide of man in every age, and under the ever-varying circumstances of society. It resembles a stream flowing from an inexhaustible fountain. Is the assumption, that it is the invention of credulous enthusiasts, one which will satisfy the demands of reason or of philosophic thought?

St. John says, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." This testimony consists in the perfect adaptation of the character of Jesus Christ to all the wants and aspirations of human nature [3].

[3] It is impossible to exhibit the entire force of this portion of the argument in a single chapter. Those who are desirous of estimating it fully may consult the work in which I have discussed the entire question, "The Jesus of the Evangelists."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MORAL TEACHING OF CHRISTIANITY—ITS MANY-SIDEDNESS AND WIDTH.

THE characteristic of all enthusiasts and fanatics is one-sidedness. They seize on an idea and carry it out to its utmost limits, and apply it alike to all times and all circumstances. Similar features also distinguish the morality of credulity. If bodies of men, influenced by these principles, had elaborated a system of moral teaching, narrowness would certainly be one of its most distinguishing characteristics.

But narrowness of view is, unhappily, not confined to persons of this description. It is one of the original tendencies of human nature. It is a disease from which even philosophers are far from being free, and is widely diffused among men of profound religious feeling. The power to take a wide view of things, either religious, moral, or political, is so far from being the rule, that it is the exception among mankind.

If, therefore, one of the most remarkable characteristics of the moral teaching of the

New Testament is its width and catholicity, it is evident that it could not have grown up in the bosom of a community whose leading trait was enthusiasm, fanaticism, and credulity. If its tone is pre-eminently elevated, it is no less clear that it never constituted the moral atmosphere of imposture.

I have already considered the perfection of morality as it is exhibited in the person of our Lord. This constitutes the New Testament ideal of abstract perfection, after which the Christian is always to aim, but to which he will never fully attain. A set of enthusiasts would have propounded the highest form of this character, as the only practical rule of human conduct. But the teaching of Christianity propounds a body of moral principles for man, suited to the imperfection of his condition.

I will adduce an example of this. One of the most striking traits in the character of Jesus Christ is the total absence of all reference to self as an impelling principle of action. But while this is put forth as the ideal of perfection, the New Testament has distinctly recognized the importance of the principle of enlightened self-love, as one of the bases of morality in ordinary men. This is done in the most

distinct terms both by Christ and His Apostles.

If the teaching of the New Testament had been the production of enthusiasts, we should have found no accommodation in favour of human nature as there actually is. Those who framed the conception of the absolute unselfishness of the character of Christ, would have made it the sole rule applicable to ordinary men.

To prove this, we can adduce the testimony, not only of credulous men, but of philosophers. The pure disinterestedness of virtue was the great doctrine of the Stoics. With cruel consistency they taught the extermination of every feeling in the breast which terminates in self. In modern times the opposite tendency is equally remarkable to resolve even the most disinterested actions into modifications of the principle of self-love. From this one-sidedness the writers of the New Testament are absolutely free. Their moral teaching assumes and recognizes the existence of all the great facts of human nature.

It is quite beyond the purpose of this volume to discuss the question of our moral sentiments. It is sufficient to take for granted what apart from all theory is a palpable fact, that, while in ordinary men there is a feeling of duty quite

distinct from the consequences with which an action may be attended, yet a desire for happiness is deeply implanted in our bosom, and forms one of the most powerful motives which can act on the mind. Christianity does not seek to eradicate this, but to assign it a proper place in our spiritual constitution.

He Whose life was a complete sacrifice of self, and Who taught that we should be perfect even as our Father who is in heaven is perfect, urged on His hearers the consideration that he who denied Him before men should be denied before the angels of God. He who gave His own life for men put to others the solemn question, What shall a man give in exchange for his soul? To him who abandoned all things for His sake He promised the most abundant recompense in this world and in the world to come. The teaching of Jesus Christ addresses itself to every one of the primary feelings of the human heart.

Next to our Lord, St. Paul is the greatest example of self-renunciation. For Christ he had forsaken every thing which men prize. Yet he utters the precept, "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to

come;" and directs that it should be insisted on by the Christian teacher, "Godliness," says he, "with contentment, is great gain." No enthusiast would have taught thus!

The moral teaching of Christianity embraces within its wide scope every thing which is pure, good, and holy in human nature, and recognizes it as part of the original constitution of man. While it clearly admits the state of degradation into which mankind has fallen, its teaching is based on the principle that all the great motives which impel us to action, have been implanted in us by our Creator's hand. Man's sinfulness is not the result of these, but is caused by their having ceased to occupy the relative position which they were intended to fill in his mental constitution. The teaching of the New Testament does not attempt to erect God's spiritual house of one material only, but of many. The love of Christ forms the foundation of the edifice, and imparts to it stability and strength. It joins all the other portions of our nature into a holy temple in the Lord.

A comprehensive philosophy cannot fail to recognize the breadth of this teaching in the manner in which it enlists all the affections of man's moral nature into the service of what

is holy. It is summed up in the following passage of St. Paul. I will consider it in detail.

"Whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think of these things." (Phil. iv. 8.)

First, "Whatsoever things are true or truthful." Truthfulness then is one of the foundations on which morality rests. Philosophy likewise teaches that that which is essentially right at all times, and under all circumstances, must be in conformity with abstract and immutable truth. This great principle thus recognized by philosophy forms one of the most distinguishing characteristics of Christian teaching. Christianity does not claim our allegiance because it is expedient, or because it is the command of another, but because its teachings are in conformity with immutable and eternal truth.

According to the three first gospels, our Lord habitually appealed to the conscience, and to man's intuitive perception of moral truth. According to that of St. John, this formed one of the most marked features of His distinctive teaching. A few passages will

suffice to prove it. "Life eternal is the knowledge of the only true God, and of Jesus Christ, whom He hath sent;" "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Here truth is represented to be the foundation of all holy moral actions, the morally right is in the closest connexion with what is intellectually true. But it goes even farther than this, and teaches that a deep conviction of truth, whether we designate it by the words knowledge or faith, is one of the mainsprings of morality itself. In a similar manner it represents want of conformity to truth, as the foundation of moral evil.

In the epistle written by the author of this gospel, knowledge stands in a direct relation to moral holiness. To be entirely out of harmony with truth is, in the language of St. John, but another name for a condition of intense moral corruption; to be in harmony with it is the same thing as to be morally holy.

The same underlying thought pervades all the other writings of the New Testament, though not in so marked a manner as those of St. John. Ignorance and sin, light and holiness, are united in its pages in an indissoluble union.

This teaching is in conformity with a sound philosophy. All attempts to divorce man's intellectual from his spiritual and moral being have ended either in extravagance, or in mental degradation. They have been so blended together by the Creator, that no dissecting-knife of the speculator has availed to sever the union. The more this teaching is analyzed, the more profound will be the conviction, that the Galilean fishermen have discovered a truth which philosophy acknowledges, but has as yet been unable perfectly to fathom. Christianity has addressed itself alike to the intellect and to the heart.

Secondly, "Whatsoever things are honest," ὅσα σεμνά[1]. These words include whatever ancient morality embraced under the terms—the noble, the venerable, the great, and the admirable. These include nearly every thing which was excellent in ancient ethics. Man's moral nature recognizes these as motives; and Christianity embraces them among her moral principles. Taking them generally, they involve the whole aspect of disinterested virtue.

[1] Possibly St. Paul meant to include under ὅσα σεμνά the morally beautiful, τὰ καλά. Whether he did so or not, this principle is unquestionably recognized in our Lord's teaching.

A considerable portion of the teaching of our Lord in the discourse in St. Luke corresponding to the Sermon on the Mount, is founded on this principle. One or two instances will suffice to show the manner in which He has incorporated these motives into His teaching; "If ye love them that love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. And if ye do good to them that do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners to receive as much again."

In these words we have a distinct appeal to the sense of moral beauty and goodness, which is involved in a disinterested action. The Christian is not to love with a view to the result. He is to do things from which no visible advantage springs, other than from the moral beauty of the action itself. He is to do that for which he does not get even corresponding gratitude. The moral nature of man, unless sunken in a state of degradation, recognizes that there is something beautiful in disinterested virtue. Acts of self-sacrifice it recognizes as great and noble. The breadth of Christian teaching embraces all these; it rejects no primary principle of man's moral constitution.

The words which follow are worthy of particular attention, because they contain an appeal to the principle of disinterestedness, united with a rational regard for our own happiness. Our Lord adds, "But love ye your enemies, and do good and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for He is kind to the unthankful and the evil."

The opening words of this passage contain a distinct appeal to our sense of the good and lovely. Christians are to hope for no direct return for their kind actions. But the Great Teacher does not fail to recognize that man is formed to be swayed by a multitude of motives, among which the desire of happiness is a very powerful one. He therefore enforces this duty by the consideration that the reward of those who perform such disinterested actions shall be great, and they shall be the children of the Highest. He then gives further weight to the precept by urging the duty of imitating God, who is kind to the unthankful and the evil.

It may be objected that the teaching would have been more systematic if these latter considerations had been omitted. The answer to this is, that the object of Christianity is not to propound a scientific system of morals, but to

appeal to every thing in man which can impart force to the principle of holiness.

Thirdly, "Whatsoever things are just." A sense of justice is implanted in the conscience. Every man has a sense that something just exists before which it is his duty to bow. It is a feeling which is often greatly perverted. The limits within which the duty is recognized may be very narrow, but still within these narrow bounds the feeling exists, and by means of it a powerful appeal may be addressed to the human heart. This sense of natural justice forms the foundation on which one of the great precepts of Jesus Christ is erected—"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Man cannot help feeling the precept reasonable—to do as he would be done by,—however much he may violate it in his practice. It constitutes an appeal to enlightened reason.

A precept of St. Paul on almsgiving forms a singular illustration of the mode in which the writers of the New Testament appeal to this principle, and of the common sense which actuated them: "Not that other men be eased and ye burdened; but by an equality, that now at this time, your abundance may be a supply to their want, that their abundance may be also a supply to your want, that there

may be an equality." This is not the language of fanaticism, but of a man who took the widest and most comprehensive view of human nature.

Fourthly, "Whatsoever things are pure." It is needless to observe that to this principle the teaching of Christianity appeals strongly: "Blessed are the pure in heart," says Jesus Christ, "for they shall see God."

This is a virtue which has been only dimly recognized by natural morality. It has been correctly observed that it is hardly possible to find a man in the heathen world of whom the term "holy" in a Christian sense would be a correct designation. Still the principle, though most imperfectly recognized, was not unknown. It forms one of the glories of Christianity to have brought it into prominent light. Now that it has done so, the conscience of man re-echoes its assent, and pronounces that purity of heart is a divine virtue.

Fifthly, "Whatsoever things are lovely." A pure soul perceives an inherent loveliness in holiness. One aspect of morality presents it to us in the form of law, issuing from the supreme will of the Creator, imposed by Him as the moral Governor of His creatures. But while the authors of the New Testament teach

us the fundamental groundwork of duty, that God is to be feared, reverenced, and obeyed, they also present obligation to us on the ground of the inherent loveliness of holiness. This principle lies at the root of the parable of the prodigal son. Such is the view which St. Paul takes of all human duties, in that chapter which Renan has pronounced to be only excelled in exquisiteness, in the whole course of literature, by some portion of the teaching of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. xiii.).

Sixthly, "Whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think of these things." This appeal is a most remarkable proof of the wide catholicity of Christian teaching. It is well known that, owing to the imperfection of his other motives, the philosopher was compelled to appeal to the love of praise as an incentive to virtue. This was to venture on ground not a little dangerous. Public opinion was but an imperfect measure of rectitude. Still the general sense of mankind, however imperfect it may be, has been given in favour of virtue. But its showy and less solid forms have received the largest amount of its homage, especially that class which constitutes the heroic virtues. These taken by themselves are liable to greater

perversion than any other qualities of the mind. When the love of praise was made the sole measure of action, a number of splendid vices were in danger of being substituted for genuine virtue. The danger was far from an imaginary one. The love of praise in the ancient world, when it fixed itself on the pursuit of glory, perverted the system of practical morality. Nor has it been less fatal to human happiness in modern times.

Still the love of approbation is a primary principle in human nature. If so, it must be capable of an application favourable to holiness. A man who is utterly destitute of it would be incapable of virtue. Christianity is therefore right in giving it a recognized place in its moral teaching.

But while they have done this, the writers of the New Testament are quite aware of the abuse to which it is exposed. They have therefore guarded it by the most careful restrictions. We are earnestly cautioned against referring to mere popular approbation as a measure of holiness: "Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you, for so did their fathers unto the false prophets." Hypocrites who trade in the praise of men "shall have their reward." The praise of

men is opposed to the praise of God. The love of approbation to which Christianity appeals is the approbation of the holy.

The difficulty of invoking this principle in a system of moral teaching is extreme; but its dangers are thoroughly guarded against in the New Testament. The place which is assigned to it is a subordinate one. It is intended to be subsidiary only: virtue founded on it alone would be no virtue. Yet as an original principle in our mental constitution it has a distinct acknowledgment. The teachers of the duty of absolute self-sacrifice, of doing good because it is right, of basing moral obligation on that which is true, morally beautiful, pure, just, and lovely, have succeeded in bringing the love of approbation to bear as a holy principle on the human spirit.

It is true that this principle is rarely referred to in the teaching of our Lord; still it is recognized by Him whenever He urges a sense of the divine approbation as a motive for holy action. Combined with the feeling of shame, it is also referred to in the parable of the guests who were bidden to the marriage-feast: "And thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room, that

when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher. Then shall *thou have worship* in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee." In the writings of St. Paul we find this appeal much more common.

Such is the many-sidedness of the moral teaching of Christianity. Enthusiasts and fanatics appeal to one principle alone. Christian men have not unfrequently imitated them, and have denounced many of the primary principles of man's mental constitution as sinful. To systematic minds the charm of reducing all action to some one principle is great. The writers of the New Testament have taken a larger and a truer view of morality than multitudes of philosophers. Their breadth of view is inconsistent with narrow-mindedness. It is impossible, therefore, that Christianity can have been gradually developed by a multitude of credulous enthusiasts.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MORAL TEACHING OF CHRISTIANITY—THE LAW OF DUTY AND ITS LAW OF LOVE.

In the former chapter I have pointed out the comprehensiveness of the teaching of Christianity, and proved that there is no principle of our mental constitution which it does not enlist in the service of holiness. I must now consider the two foundations on which it erects all moral obligation, the law of duty and the law of love, and point out their all-embracing character.

As I have explained already, all the ancient systems of morality recognized a law of duty. Their imperfection consisted in their inability to find a personal being in whom the sense of obligation could be made to centre. This deprived it of all power. Christianity has remedied this by centering obligation in a personal God. Between Him and man exist the intimate bonds of Creator and creature, Father and child, the Governor and the governed. A perfect moral law is seated in

the divine character. Man's obligation to obey it flows directly from the relationship between God and him. It is embodied in the one great thought, "Be ye holy, for I am holy," who am thy sovereign Lord, thy Creator, thy Benefactor and thy Judge. This embodies every obligation which we can owe to God, and every duty we can owe to man.

Christianity, in placing the centre of obligation in God, has extended the idea of duty so as to embrace the entire activities of man. There is nothing which does not come within its comprehensive grasp. The creature has received every thing from his Creator; God therefore has a right to man's entire service. All men are the children of God. It follows that they are bound to act towards each other as members of a common family. It is impossible to impart to the principle of responsibility a greater depth and width.

Obligation, when centred in God, becomes all-embracing. The conception of the fitting and the morally beautiful is vague; that of political obligation is weak; that of expediency is a mere question of calculation. But holiness, obligatory on man, because it is the essential character of God, is at once distinct, morally beautiful, all-embracing, and, under the govern-

ment of the Creator, conducive to our highest happiness.

From the conception of duty seated in God, Christianity evolves a body of great moral principles applicable to every condition of mankind. Its special rules are intended as illustrations of those principles as applicable to the circumstances of the times to which they relate.

Christianity announces two great moral laws, the law of duty, and the law of love. I admit that it is only in a secondary sense that the word law, which strictly speaking means a rule of duty emanating from authority, is probably applicable to the conception of love. Love cannot be created by a command, duty can. Love implies an act of acquiescence between the object and the subject. Love in the subject is the result of something lovable in the object, which attracts the subject to itself. In duty viewed as emanating from law, these two feelings may be more or less imperfectly united. One of the characteristics of the teaching of Christianity is, to elevate action from a bare sense of duty and obedience to law as a rule, to the free sacrifice of a grateful act of love.

As long as duty is surveyed as bare duty,

there is a constant tendency to narrow its obligation within the limits of strict rule. When a man has obeyed the rigid rule, he has done all which is required of him. It resembles the fulfilment of the letter of a bond. The great object of the teaching of the New Testament is to substitute for this the morality of the spirit, the law written and engraven on the heart. As long as moral obligation is contemplated as bare law, it has a constant tendency to degenerate into a quibbling casuistry.

Although duty in the Old Testament is frequently exhibited under the form of legal obligation, a higher principle is not unknown to its pages. It contains the precept, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Its width was narrowed by the sense in which the term "neighbour" was understood in the ancient world. It is a distinguishing feature of the teaching of Jesus Christ that He has extended the obligation to every member of the human family. If the question be asked of Him, Who is my neighbour? His answer is, That the obligation of love embraces every member of the family of man.

Such is the all-comprehensive law of the Gospel. According to its teaching, this one precept embraces every possible duty which

can exist between man and man. To comply with it fulfils the entire moral law.

The precept, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," directs us not to measure our standard of obligation to others by their conduct to us, but substitutes the love which we feel for ourselves as the only limit of our duty to others. Our love of ourselves compels us to wish our own happiness. Reason cannot help pronouncing that the precept which requires us to do to others what we would wish them to do to us, is a reasonable duty. In all cases of doubtful obligation, a man has only to ask himself, What if he were placed in a similar position he would desire to have done to him? The reply of his own self-love is the measure of his duty to his neighbour. This great principle, therefore, is so all-comprehensive in its character as to render a code of duties unnecessary.

In making this great principle the foundation of His moral teaching, Jesus Christ has proclaimed not a mere partial system of morality, applicable only to particular times or races of mankind, but one fitted for binding together universal man into the common family of God. There is no duty, individual, social, or political, which it will not embrace. It is

fitted alike to be the guiding principle of man in every stage of his civilization, of the wise and of the ignorant, of the master and the servant, of the rich and of the poor; in one word, of all the complex relationships which can exist between man and man. United with the other great principle of Christian teaching, the duty of self-sacrifice, it constitutes a moral law of actual perfection.

There is only one point where this precept may be viewed as coming short of this as a rule of practice. It may be objected that if a man does not love himself, he is not bound to seek the good of others. The teaching of Christianity has made provision for this. Our Lord has given a new commandment, which has removed the measure of duty and the standard of obligation from ourselves, and placed them in something external. The only limits of duty which it recognizes is the love of Jesus Christ towards us.

In the new commandment our Lord exhibits Himself as the measure and limit of all possible obligation. "Love one another," says He, not only as you love yourselves, but "as I have loved you." It belongs to that higher form of Christian life which transforms what may be a painful act of duty into a sacrifice of love.

It differs from every other moral principle by containing within itself the measure of duty, and the motive which imparts vitality to it. You ask to what extent self-sacrifice is demanded of us; the answer is, that we are to love as Christ has loved us. Christ's love toward us consisted in a life of self-sacrifice, followed by an agonizing death. The rule, therefore, is one which is all-embracing. There is no duty which the Christian can be called on to discharge of which it is not the perfect sanction.

But it also contains within itself a motive which is able to impart power to the rule. As such it holds a unique place among commandments. If we ask why we are bound to the disinterested love of others, the precept supplies the answer,—because Christ has loved us. Its power as a motive is in proportion as a man feels the greatness of the love which Christ has exhibited towards him. The new commandment raises duty to the greatest possible elevation. It says, Love as I have loved. Love because I have loved. It contains the rule, motive, and example all in one.

It is worthy of remark, that Jesus Christ is the solitary character in history who could have substituted the new for the old commandment as a rule of obedience for His

followers, without lowering the entire standard of morality. In His mouth it is supremely fitting, and in His alone. In every other the attempt to supplement the moral law, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," by the injunction, "Love one another as I have loved you," would be ludicrous. Let us suppose it placed in the mouth of Socrates as a summary of every conceivable obligation; and we immediately feel its inadequacy as a guide of life. The command bears a direct relation to the supernatural elements in His character. It is the complete and perfect self-sacrifice of Jesus Christ which communicates to it its entire potency. In His mouth it has been more mighty than any words which have been uttered by the lips of men, because the love exhibited in His character is that of absolute perfection. The character of Jesus Christ as it is depicted in the Gospels and the new commandment mutually correspond to each other.

I have observed that one of the great objects of the moral teaching of Christianity is to elevate the law of duty into a law of love. It therefore insists on the necessity of having that law written on the heart and engraven on the affections. Its highest form is to exhibit it, not as an outward objective rule, like a law

engraven on stone, but as a living principle. It therefore especially exhibits the holiness of the moral law in its aspect of loveliness. It is not so much referred to God in His character of Creator and sovereign Lord as in that of Father. Duty in the one case is obedience to a command; in the other, it is the spontaneous sacrifice of a willing heart. This, as part of the moral law, pervades every portion of the New Testament. The new commandment is its culmination. God is to be loved, because He is lovely. His moral law is to be obeyed, because it is the embodiment of the character of a loving God. All possible duties are to be viewed no longer as burdens, but as the return of grateful affection to one Who has loved us with the love of actual perfection. Its substitution of law for love is summed up in one great declaration of the Apostle, "There is no fear in love. Perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us."

Such is the perfection and all-comprehensive character of Christian teaching. Its parts fit into one another with an exquisite propriety. Nothing so pure and elevated, so wide and Catholic, has ever been conceived of by the

mind of man. It has nothing partial or narrow, but is as broad as human nature. It rests responsibility on a foundation which is able to support the weight by placing its centre in God. It has elevated duty to the purest conception of disinterested love. Yet on the theory of unbelievers this must have been a natural development out of the narrow spirit of Jewish sectarianism—a spirit which in the times of Jesus Christ, instead of being in advance of that contained in the Law and the Prophets, was a movement purely retrograde. History tells us that the course of its actual development was precisely contrary to that contained in the New Testament. It produced a system of moral teaching which embodied the narrowest spirit of legalism, technicality, and formalism. Can the spirit of pure benevolence be the natural stream which issues from such a fountain, or a narrow exclusiveness the parent of the widest comprehensiveness? Yet according to the theories of modern unbelievers, the one must have emanated from the other: Christianity was a natural growth out of the Judaism of A.D. 30. The bare statement of the fact is its refutation.

CHAPTER X.

THE MORAL TEACHING OF CHRISTIANITY—ITS SPIRIT OF TOLERATION.

PERHAPS there is nothing which affords so decisive a proof that Christianity is not the product of the spirit of the age in which it originated as the spirit of comprehensiveness and forbearance which distinguishes every part of its teaching. Its breadth is so great that even up to the present time Christians have but imperfectly realized it, and the widest philosophical speculations have never exceeded it. During long ages the practice of the Christian Church has sadly contradicted the express teaching of the New Testament on this point. Nothing is more certain than that a moral teaching which inculcates the widest principles of mutual forbearance could not have been the result of any natural development effected by a body of men who were animated by the spirit of enthusiastic credulity.

The testimony of history affords the most undeniable evidence that there is a great

tendency among religious men to shrink into a narrow spirit of sectarianism. This is frequently the greater in proportion as the life of religion is the deeper. It bears a close analogy to the lust of dominion which we see in the political world. Man has a natural tendency to tyrannize over his fellows. In the religious world this tendency manifests itself in the desire to impose on others a uniformity of thought and practice on all points, small and great. The ardour with which a multitude of unimportant beliefs and observances have been grasped at by different sects, and have been attempted to be imposed on one another, is very remarkable. All religions have had their Shibboleths. They have formed no peculiarities of either Christianity or Judaism. To find a man animated by profound convictions, and yet who is of a large and liberal spirit, has always been the exception and not the rule.

These positions cannot be denied by those who reject the divine origin of Christianity; such persons are never wearied with laying to its charge the spirit of sectarianism and exclusiveness. Many writers of this school have asserted that it is the natural fruit of religion, and that the only thing which has succeeded

in exorcising it is the creation of a spirit of scepticism. It has been asserted by a distinguished modern writer, that to this spirit alone we are indebted for the establishment of the great principle of toleration.

It is not to be disputed that the history of Christianity has been deeply tinged with the narrow spirit of religious exclusiveness. The prevalence of the spirit of persecution during long and weary ages affords of this fact the many unquestionable proofs. The Church has become divided into a multitude of sects, who will hold no communion with one another; and many of these have gradually shrunk up into a narrower and narrower exclusiveness. No unbeliever can dispute that such is the tendency of human nature, and that it is so strong that nothing but special influences have succeeded in counteracting it.

Such being the fact, I observe that there is one eminently religious book, composed by men who were animated by the profoundest convictions, and one only, which is yet animated by the spirit of the widest comprehensiveness, and that is, the New Testament. This stands as an oasis in the midst of the great desert of intolerance. It is a book of the profoundest convictions, but its tolerance is all that can

be required by the most sceptical philosophers.

If this be so, it has the closest bearing on my argument. Our opponents assert that the supposed inventors of Christianity were not a body of sceptical philosophers, but of enthusiasts and fanatics. If so, the development must have followed the inevitable laws of human nature. Enthusiasm and fanaticism, therefore, could only have produced narrowness and intolerance. From this reasoning there is no possibility of escape, except on the supposition that, in the case of Christianity, there has been some interference with the ordinary laws which operate on human nature. There is no doubt that the position of our opponents is true, that religions which have developed themselves under the influence of causes purely natural have been intolerant and exclusive, in proportion to the intensity of the belief of their votaries. The extent to which intolerance has prevailed among Christians has blinded unbelievers to the fact that the position taken by them is destructive of their own reasonings. They have not perceived that, although the principle of intolerance has widely prevailed in the Christian Church, it is utterly contrary to the teaching of the New Testament.

This point being one of extreme importance, I must give distinctive proof of its truth. And, first, let us consider the teaching of our Lord on this subject.

In order that we may view it aright, we must form a correct estimate of the nature of our Lord's claims. No one was under a greater temptation to intolerance. The Jesus of the Evangelists claims to belong to the order of the supernatural, and to be in possession of the fullest knowledge of truth. He teaches with a divine authority. No teacher of religion ever advanced higher claims or made equal demands on the faith and acquiescence of mankind. Such pretensions, if they had been advanced by an ordinary man, were precisely such as would have generated the atmosphere of the narrowest exclusiveness. It has produced this result in human teachers of far inferior pretensions.

It is, of course, evident that no man who professes to found his teaching on a profound conviction of truth can be indifferent to the great principles on which his teaching is based. Such is indubitably the case with Jesus Christ. Still His teaching is wholly devoid of a sectarian aspect. What is more remarkable, on points not affecting its great fundamental

principles, He is intensely tolerant. I will adduce a few remarkable examples.

1. While our Lord declared that there was one sin which is incapable of forgiveness, He expressly excepted from it all manner of sins and blasphemies which were committed against Himself in His state of humiliation.

2. Not only did He assert that the conscience belonged to God alone, but also that the temporal sword had no place in His spiritual kingdom. Persecution has been alone possible by Christians attempting to grasp that sword which their Master declared not to be theirs to wield. If the teaching of our Lord had been acted on by His Church, it would have freed Christianity from one of the greatest scandals which have oppressed it,—the great sin of religious persecution.

3. Although our Lord decided that Jerusalem was, according to the divine ordinances, the centre of the worship of the old dispensation, yet He abode with the Samaritans two days, and would have lodged in one of their villages a second time, if they had been willing to have received Him. Similar points of difference have been made in all ages the ground of irreconcilable divisions.

4. When we consider the vehemence of the religious feud which existed between the Jews and the Samaritans, the position which is assigned to the latter in the Gospels is worthy of deep attention. While the Jews are ever clamouring for a multitude of signs and prodigies, the Samaritans believe on Christ solely on account of His heavenly teaching. Of the ten lepers who were cured, the nine ungrateful ones are Jews; the one who returned to render thanks was a Samaritan.

5. It is impossible not to recognize a direct purpose in portraying the merciful man of the parable as a Samaritan, and the two merciless, the one as a priest, and the other as a Levite. The two latter were apparently returning from their ministrations in the temple. Any other nationality might have been introduced; but the fact that the merciful man was a Samaritan, abhorred by the orthodox Jew, is that which imparts its telling form to the parable. It was hardly possible to have given a stronger rebuke to bigotry.

6. Another remarkable trait of our Lord is worthy of notice, because it is often passed over. As a Teacher, none made higher claims. Of all things He is supremely worthy, even of

worship on the throne of God. On one occasion, He even commended the expenditure of three hundred pence on His person rather than that they should have been given to the poor; yet He Himself taught that it was possible to be too much occupied with external attentions to His divine person. Such an incident would never have come into the head of an intolerant fanatic.

7. When the inhabitants of a Samaritan village refused to allow our Lord to lodge in it, the disciples wished to call down fire from heaven to consume them for the offence. The Old Testament had afforded them a precedent in the act of Elijah. Our Lord not only forbade it, but was angry at the thought, and declared such an act to be wholly at variance with the spirit of His Gospel[1]. Would that the Church had attended to their Master's teaching, instead of listening to the suggestions of unsanctified human nature!

8. Another very singular incident is a most remarkable instance of the same spirit. There

[1] A portion of this passage has been rejected by many editors. It is easy to understand the reasons why the words might have been omitted in the manuscripts; but it is hardly possible on any ordinary principles of criticism to account for their insertion on the supposition that they are an interpolation.

was a man who, while he performed miracles in our Lord's name, did not belong to the number of His professed followers. James and John witnessed his proceedings and forbad him. The act was very natural. "Forbid him not," says Jesus, "for there is no man who can perform a miracle in My name who will lightly speak evil of Me." Such teaching is without example in the history of religious teachers. Yet this Teacher was none other than Jesus Christ. Often have Christ's professed followers imitated the example of the disciples rather than of the Master. Let it be remembered that it is possible to perform moral miracles in the name of Jesus Christ, yet ordinary good men find it the greatest difficulty to recognize as a fellow-worker one who follows not with them.

Such is the teaching of the great Master. Wonderfully is it exemplified in that of Paul the persecutor.

No man's natural temperament afforded a stronger substratum for bigotry than his. His convictions were intense. He had in him an earnestness and a purpose which nothing daunted. The general turn of his mind was fiery; yet his teaching exhibits a breadth of toleration which is only second to that of

Jesus Christ. The coolest philosopher has never laid down principles more catholic.

The special occasions which led the Apostle to develope these principles were the peculiar circumstances under which Christians were then placed. These have now passed away; but in solving them he has laid down a teaching which is valid for all time. He lays down that there is a numerous class of things connected with our religious life which in themselves are absolutely indifferent. With respect to these, he proclaims the entire freedom of the conscience.

1. Christians were troubled in those times about the duty of the observance of certain days. He declares that in the fulness of the light possessed by himself every day was alike. Christianity vindicated every day as the property of Christ. Notwithstanding this decision, however, he felt that such was the force of prejudice and early training, that Christians might still entertain conscientious scruples. Some might regard particular days as having a peculiar sacredness, as, for instance, the old Jewish sabbaths and feasts. Now, what is most remarkable, although the Apostle gave an apostolical decision that such days were not binding, he forbids that the conscientious

scruples of those who thought that it was a duty to observe them should be interfered with. He who had superior light on such a point was to give evidence of it by not judging harshly him who had it not, and the latter was by no means to interfere with the conscientious conviction of him who had. He that regarded the day was to regard it to the Lord, and he that regarded not, to the Lord he was not to regard it.

2. Great were the scruples entertained in the Apostolic Church as to the eating of different articles of food. This question had a very intimate bearing on the duties of daily life. Jewish Christians retained their prejudices that different kinds of food were not only unwholesome, but unclean. They thought that food which had been offered as a sacrifice to a Gentile god had become contaminated by the act. The whole controversy involved the point whether any thing physical could produce moral contamination, and whether the Gentile gods were really demons or only imaginary beings.

St. Paul first proceeds to decide the general principle. There was nothing unclean of itself. Christ had taught before, that nothing from without entering into a man can contaminate

him. St. Paul's teaching is exactly similar, that no kind of food can exercise a moral influence. He therefore declares that all kinds of food offered for sale in the markets might be eaten without scruple. He similarly determines that a Gentile god was nothing, and that there was only one Father and one Christ.

Here, then, is the point worthy of our deepest attention. St. Paul, as a religious teacher, gave his decision in favour of the widest liberty. Yet he felt that there were Christians who could not receive it. All men had not the same amount of light, and a weak brother might still be oppressed with conscientious scruples. Was he to be compelled to violate them? No; every man was to be firmly persuaded in his own mind. The conscience might be unenlightened, but it was to be obeyed. He that could eat every kind of food without scruple was to eat to the Lord, and he who could not, to the Lord he was to not eat, and to give God thanks.

A nobler vindication of the rights of conscience has never been written by man. The great principle which is to regulate such cases for all time is, "Christ died and rose, that He might be the Lord of the dead and living." Whether, therefore, the Christian lives, he is

to live to the Lord, or whether he dies, he is to die to the Lord. He is not his own property, nor that of any other, but the sole property of Christ.

The care with which St. Paul guards these principles is very remarkable. Not only are the scruples of the unenlightened conscience to be thoroughly respected, but enlightened Christians are directed carefully to abstain from every act which could throw a temptation in the way of a weak brother to violate his convictions. He, on the other hand, is not to judge the enlightened Christian. The following instance of his teaching on this subject is very striking:—"If," says the Apostle, "an unbeliever bids you to a feast, and you be disposed to go, whatsoever is set before you eat, asking no question for conscience sake. But if any man say, This is offered in sacrifice to idols, eat not, for his sake that showed it and for conscience sake; for the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof. Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other; for why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience?"

St. Paul fearlessly carries this principle out to its utmost consequences. While he vindicates the rights of the enlightened conscience,

he earnestly warns the strong Christian that, unless he uses them with circumspection, he may become the occasion of inflicting a deep injury on the weak. The weak conscience may be emboldened to do what it believes to be wrong: "And through thy knowledge," says he, "shall the weak brother perish for whom Christ died. For when ye so sin against the brethren, and wound their weak consciences, ye sin against Christ." The great principle of love which binds every Christian to his Lord is that which is to regulate his entire conduct.

The Apostle proceeds to lay down that these precepts were not limited to the narrow subject before him, but that they involved principles of universal obligation, and were applicable to every portion of the Christian's life. "Whether ye eat," says he, "or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God, giving no offence, neither to the Jew nor to the Gentile, nor to the Church of God; even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they might be saved."

This former persecutor, who still continued animated by the profoundest personal convictions, not only wrote precepts of this kind for the guidance of others, but habitually acted on

them himself. That there is in Jesus Christ neither Jew nor Greek, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, male nor female, is a great truth of Christianity. The Church is all one in Christ Jesus. To maintain this truth the Apostle would have sacrificed his life. But the same man became a Jew to the Jew, that he might gain the Jew; to them that were without the law, as without the law, that he might gain them that are without the law; "to the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak. I became all things to all men, that I might by all means gain some." If the Church of God had heeded this teaching, it would have escaped the defilement of many a crime.

Now, how stands the case? The Pharisee and the persecutor, the man who was deeply imbued with the principles of the narrowest of narrow-minded sects which have ever appeared on this earth, has enunciated principles and enforced them by a practice so wide and tolerant, that it has taken the Christian Church eighteen long centuries before it has entered into their spirit; and even now large communions fail to appreciate them. The most energetic of missionaries, and the man of the profoundest convictions, has laid

down principles so comprehensive, that the broadest of philosophic schools would have done well to have imitated them. The man who claimed apostolical authority over the Church has directed that, in such cases, his own decisions should not be enforced to the harassing of the consciences of weaker brethren.

A teaching thus wide, tolerant, and comprehensive we shall find nowhere in the religious history of the world, except in the pages of the New Testament. It is in strict conformity with its great law of love, the possession of the spirit of which it pronounces more important than every other attainment. Yet its writers were inflamed with the warmest zeal for the great cause for which they were ready to sacrifice their lives. The charge of narrowness and bigotry which has been brought against those who have taken an energetic part in great religious movements has frequently been too true. Paul was one of these. In his early life he was the most intolerant man of the most intolerant of sects. In laying the foundation of the Christian Church he has displayed a comprehensiveness which has never been surpassed.

Yet our opponents tell us that Christianity is a mere growth, which has sprung up by natural

causes among a body of religionists who were animated by the spirit of enthusiastic and fanatical credulity. If so, it is no less contrary to nature than for icebergs to burst into flames, or for the cooling breeze to issue from the fiery furnace. It will only be possible that this teaching of Christianity could have originated in the causes which modern unbelievers have asserted it to have sprung from, when thistles take to bearing figs, and thorns grapes.

CHAPTER XI.

THE MORAL TEACHING OF CHRISTIANITY; ITS ALL COMPREHENSIVE DUTY OF SELF-SACRIFICE.

This duty as taught by Christianity, imparts to morality its pre-eminently Christian aspect. It raises ordinary duties into Christian duties. It embraces the entire range of the Christian life; so that there is no action which can be performed which ought not to be brought under its influence. It is that principle which renders Christ's yoke easy, and His burden light.

The foundation on which the duty is erected is the relation in which the Christian stands to Christ His Lord: Christ has loved him with the supremest love, even to the extent of dying for him. This love requires the corresponding duty in those in behalf of whom it has been exerted, of presenting themselves and their entire lives as a devoted offering to Christ. This duty Christianity designates as a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice.

Its peculiar character is, that it is pre-eminently spontaneous and voluntary. Under its influence the Christian acts as a priest, and offers himself to God, with the desire to do it more and more perfectly and voluntarily. When performed under its influences, moral duties are divested of every thing which might impart to them a mere burdensome or legal character, and become in the highest sense of the word free acts. This aspect of Christian teaching is based on the supreme attractiveness of Christ's person.

As this great principle underlies the entire teaching of the New Testament, it will be necessary to give it a careful consideration. It renders the evolution of a complete code of duties unnecessary, because, where it is a living principle, it is self-suggestive of every conceivable form of duty.

The Christian, according to the New Testament, is God's property by creation and providence, and Christ's by redemption. This latter point, though not directly asserted, is every where assumed in the teaching of our Lord. It constitutes the only foundation which can bear the weight of the vast demands of self-sacrifice which our Lord made on His followers.

Nothing can exceed the comprehensiveness of these claims. The instances are many, but one will be sufficient to show the extent to which the duty of self-sacrifice was carried by Him. "He that loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me; he that loveth son or daughter more than Me, is not worthy of Me. He that taketh not up his cross and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me. He that loveth his life shall lose it; but he that loseth his life for My sake, the same shall find it." Our Lord here claims a right to supersede in His person every other form of obligation, and to enthrone Himself supreme above it.

On the foundation which Jesus Christ laid the Apostles built. A few instances must suffice in proof, for they are too numerous to be quoted. "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." Again, "No man liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself; for whether we live, we live unto the Lord, and whether we die, we die unto the Lord. Christ died and rose that He might be Lord of the dead and living." Again, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but

Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." In these passages, the Apostle proclaims the great principle of self-sacrifice demanded by our Lord, to be fundamental to Christian morality.

This great principle is employed in the New Testament, to supplement all the other duties of morality. It is to be found running throughout the whole of the sacred writings, and elevates ordinary morality into Christian morality. I select a few examples, as illustrations. Christian teaching recognizes the obedience of children to parents as an ordinary duty. It further declares that it is a command of God, sanctioned by a promise. "Honour thy father and mother," says St. Paul, "which is the first commandment, with promise," &c. But the same writer imparts to the duty its pre-eminently Christian character, when he writes, "Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing *to the Lord.*" We possess a complete round of similar duties enforced on this same principle. Servants are enjoined to be obedient to their masters, in singleness of heart *as unto Christ.* When a servant was a slave, his con-

dition was cheered by the consideration that though politically a slave, he was the *Lord's free man*. Masters are to do the same things unto them, knowing that they have a *Master in heaven*, who is no respecter of persons. Husbands are to love their wives as *Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it*. Wives are to submit themselves to their own husbands *as unto the Lord*. In a word, with respect to the whole range of duties, of whatever kind they may be, the Christian is "to do it *heartily unto the Lord, and not unto men;* knowing that of *the Lord* ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance, for ye serve *the Lord Christ*."

Christ is thus made the centre of duty in its Christian aspect. Services which would be heavy when rendered to human imperfection on the ordinary motives, are thus converted into free-will offerings, when they are rendered to Him. Christ therefore takes the heavy burden off men's shoulders. This world is full of inequalities and moral evil, which make the performance of many duties very hard; as for example, those of a slave to his master. Christ interposes Himself to take off the burden, and says, "Render them not to man, but *to Me*."

This principle is a new life rather than a duty. Where it exists as a living power, it em-

braces the entire man, and renders specific teaching on many particular subjects unnecessary. The Christian will readily evolve what is due to others, in whatever relation of life he may be placed, without the necessity of reducing the line of duty to rule and measure. Christianity teaches plainly that wherever there is a duty, there is a need for self-sacrifice, if the love of self interferes with the discharge of it. But it goes beyond this; it not only commands it as a duty, which may inflict pain in its performance, but it asks it at our hands as a free-will offering to the supremest love. The image of the divine Christ, if steadily contemplated, converts the duty into an enthusiasm.

This all-pervading aspect of Christian teaching is an efficient answer to all the objections which have been alleged as to the imperfection of the morality of the New Testament. I particularly allude to the whole class of virtues commonly called political. It is most true that it nowhere unfolds our political duties in a definite form: teaching as it does the entire devotion of the whole life to Christ as a voluntary sacrifice, there was no necessity that it should do so. All that was necessary was, that it should distinctly recognize the existence of political

obligation. This it has done in the most distinct terms. If it had gone farther than this, it would have dangerously interfered with existing institutions, and might have imparted to its teaching a revolutionary character. While it teaches that a Christian is to perform all his civil obligations, be they what they may, to the Lord, and for His sake, and not to man, it places them on a sound basis, enabling him to adapt himself to the ever-altering condition of political society. This has rendered Christianity a religion suitable for every form of human civilization, and contains within it the entire demands of political morality, far more completely than if they had been laid down in a formal treatise.

By teaching that whatever the Christian undertakes is to be done to Christ, and by enforcing as part of it the duty of political obligation, it has imparted to political morality a power of which it was previously destitute. The Christian's obligations as a citizen are acknowledged; and in addition to the ordinary motives, on which they are to be performed, Christ asserts His claim that they should be performed for His sake. St. Peter's teaching on this point is full and express, "Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that

whereas they speak against you as evil-doers, they may by your good works which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation. Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man *for the Lord's sake:* whether to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them *that are sent by Him* for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that by well doing ye shall put to silence the ignorance of foolish men; as free, but not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honour all men. Love the brotherhood Fear God. Honour the king." Then follows a passage calculated to alleviate the heavy yoke of the duties of slaves by the example of Christ.

The teaching of the New Testament, as exhibited in this passage, imparts a new vitality to political morality. It forms a marvellous contrast to the ordinary teachings of Judaism, that civil obedience was not due to heathen governors except on compulsion. The Christian's devotion to Jesus Christ is to be enthusiastic. All ordinary duties are his, and this consideration is to breathe a new spirit into the discharge of them. It makes the Christian, as circumstances require it, either the faithful public servant or the hero.

It may be objected that the State is put forward rather in a negative than in a positive aspect. I ask how, under existing circumstances, could it possibly have been otherwise? It was at this period so corrupt, that to have taught a devotion to it would have been inconsistent with pure public morality. One cannot conceive of a holy man being fired with an ardent patriotism for such a condition of political society as that involved in the Roman Empire during the first century of our era. Enthusiastic loyalty to the Roman Emperors of that period was impossible. If, on the other hand, the writers of the New Testament had given a formal precept to Christians, enforcing on them the duty of becoming political reformers, this would have at once aroused the mighty power of the Empire to crush the Christian Church. As there was nothing in the existing state of society to kindle a spark of enthusiasm in the discharge of duty, the New Testament asks the Christian to discharge its duties *to the Lord Christ*.

Similar is the teaching of St. Paul. In considering this subject, we must remember that he had to deal with many Christians who belonged to the most turbulent race in the ancient world, and with others who had im-

bibed their principles. St. Paul therefore emphatically declares that whatever were the supreme powers of a State, even if they were vested in a Nero, civil obedience was a Christian duty. At the same time, he goes back to the great principle on which society has been based by God, "Rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil." Such is the true idea of a State, however much corruption may have perverted its original intention. Wherefore, argues the apostle, the Christian ought to be subject, as a good citizen, "not only for wrath," i. e. the fear of coercion, "but also for conscience sake." But conscience he has elsewhere claimed as Christ's exclusive province—of it He is the supreme Lord.

Similar also is the apostle's language with respect to every kind of public duty. Nor is the force of it at all weakened because the language in which it is enforced contains allusions to the miraculous gifts, then existing in the Church. All duties are to be performed, not in stinted measure, but with alacrity. To every public duty which a Christian was required to perform in the Church he was to devote himself with all his might. Giving was to be performed with simplicity, ruling with diligence, showing mercy with cheerfulness.

Nor does he forget a wide class of duties affecting our character as citizens: "Render, therefore," says he, "to all their dues;" and to make his rule all embracing he sums up with the precept, "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another;" i. e. discharge every obligation, whether moral, social, or political; and view it not in the light of hard duty, but resolve it into the principle of love. "Put on," says he, "the Lord Christ;" "He died and rose, that He might be Lord of dead and living."

Such a mode of teaching political morality is certainly unexampled. It is a peculiar feature of the New Testament that it alone of all the books which claim to be a revelation, is wholly free from the attempt to meddle in politics. Philosophers propounded ideal political constitutions. The Mosaic institutes contain a political code. Pretenders to revelation have uniformly propounded a political legislation of some kind. But in the Christian Scriptures there is not one attempt to meddle with politics. The founder of Christianity, when asked, refused to comply. Yet He claimed to be a king, but it was of a kingdom of truth. The non-political character of the teaching of the New Testament, and yet the presence in it of a great principle, on which a most enlarged

system of social morality can be erected, is worthy of deep attention.

The question will be asked, Is Christianity right in placing Christ our Lord in the centre of its moral teaching, and supplementing every other moral principle by a sense of obligation to Him? I answer that she has imparted to pure morality a force of which it was previously destitute. Christianity has called forth a devotion of self-sacrifice which the most elevated patriotism of ancient times has failed to approach. She can marshal an army of heroes, equally numerous as that which has been created by the spirit of devotion to country or to race, freed from the many alloys which have marred the character of the latter. Have all the great men who have ever lived created even a fraction of that devoted self-sacrifice which has been kindled by the person of Jesus Christ? The devotion which has been evoked to the Church and to its King utterly eclipses that which has been created by the kingdoms of the world and their rulers. Christians as citizens have exhibited the sublimest spirit of self-sacrifice, in which a love for country has been united with a love for Jesus Christ, and the sense of devotion to a particular duty has been enforced with increased power by the

feeling that they were rendering an act of voluntary and grateful sacrifice to Him. It cannot be denied that the army of Christian self-sacrificers has been many times more numerous than that which could be collected from all other sources united. Of those who have devoted themselves to the work of alleviating human misery, and of promoting the moral and spiritual elevation of mankind, at least ninety-nine out of every hundred have been enlisted under His banner, and have derived their enthusiasm from Him.

It follows that Christianity in its teaching of the great principle of self-sacrifice as due to Jesus Christ has evoked a principle wide as the entire regions of moral obligation. Yet she has superadded this to the ordinary motives and duties of morality, and not superseded one of them. She has created the greatest of enthusiasms, and yet invested it with the spirit of the widest comprehension. She has solved the great question of political morality without directly meddling with politics. She has separated between all earthly powers and the rights of conscience with a distinctness which was before unknown; she has placed conscience supreme above all earthly force, and Christ supreme above it. Yet, if our opponents are

to be believed, this teaching gradually grew up in the minds of the narrowest of races, all whose tendencies were exclusive, and whose moral teaching consisted in the most refined distinctions. From such a source the enthusiastic credulity of the primitive Christians gradually developed the all-embracing and comprehensive teaching of Christianity! It must have been an age in which thistles produced corn, and brambles grapes.

CHAPTER XII.

CHRISTIANITY IN ITS BEARING ON CIVILIZATION. ITS TEACHING AS TO THE USE OF WEALTH.

It has been objected by modern writers that the teaching of the New Testament is adverse to the progress of civilization. It will be necessary, therefore, to ascertain what its teaching is as to the right use of wealth. On this subject great errors have been introduced by taking passages which form a part of a complete whole, and are illustrations of a specific principle, as absolute moral precepts in themselves, independent of the context in which they stand, and of the principle which they are intended to illustrate.

It is also necessary to attend to a peculiar feature which characterizes the precepts of the Gospels, and to a great extent thereof the sacred writings. They are given in the most absolute form, and are destitute of qualifications. But as the character of an action is determined by the particular circumstances of the act, no precept can be a guide

to practice without taking into account its particular circumstances. Most erroneous impressions of the teaching of the New Testament have been the result of want of attention to so obvious a fact[1].

But further: the mode of its teaching is in the highest degree popular and unsystematic. It is especially adapted to the masses of mankind rather than to the select few. It is therefore conveyed in the well-known phraseology of the day. It was a usual practice with the prophets of the Old Testament to express strong preference by direct opposition. Of this we shall find numerous examples in the New Testament.

Five points must be attentively considered in all attempts to ascertain the meaning of the precepts of the New Testament:—

1st. They must be taken in close connexion with their context.

2nd. Their mode of stating the relative importance of duties is the Jewish one of contrast.

3rd. Particular precepts must be interpreted in close relation to the principle which they are designed to illustrate.

[1] Mr. Mill, at p. 75 of his Essay on Liberty, refers to most of the passages discussed in this chapter. His language is more than open to the inference that all Christians hold their literal sense as divine teaching.

4th. All its moral precepts are given absolutely, unqualified by modifying circumstances.

5th. They are expressed in popular, and not in scientific language.

I must consider several of these precepts in detail, and first those bearing on wealth. (Matt. v. 42), "Give to him that asketh of thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away."

The entire context is as follows, and forms a complete paragraph by itself:—"Ye have heard that it has been said, An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, That ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man shall sue thee at law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also: and whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh of thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away."

It has been objected that these precepts are subversive of society.

It is obvious that these four precepts are intended to be illustrations of the principle of Christian morality which is opposed to the rule of "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for

a tooth," and cannot rightly be understood independently of it.

This precept was part of the Jewish political law. It belongs to the *lex talionis*, whereby precisely the same measure is dealt out to the wrong-doer as he has inflicted. The Jewish teachers had perverted it from a civil law into a rule of individual morality.

The rendering of like for like is a principle deeply engraven on the ordinary practice of mankind. Our Lord taught that as such it was opposed to the spirit of Christianity. In doing this He employs the mode of teaching so well understood by His countrymen, whereby comparison was expressed by strong opposition. When for example the prophet denounced in strong language the sacrifices and other ceremonial observances of Judaism, he did not mean to forbid them; but to express the fact that they were of no value compared with moral holiness. In a similar manner in opposition to the *lex talionis* as a principle of private morality, our Lord propounds that of non-resistance to evil.

The precepts which follow are evidently illustrations of the great principle of doing good, instead of requiting others in accordance with the *lex talionis*. The last of the

four asserts the contrary duty in the strongest terms as the binding law of Christianity: "Give to him that asketh of thee, and from him that would borrow of thee, turn not thou away." The addition made in St. Luke, which sums them up by laying down the regulative rule of Christian conduct: "And as ye would that men should do unto you, do ye also to them," proves beyond dispute that the precept was not intended to regulate giving and borrowing by a hard rule, but to place in a strong light the virtues of forbearance and beneficence compared with the contrary qualities.

In Matt. vi. 19 our Lord teaches as follows: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, where the rust and moth do corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither rust nor moth do corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." It has been objected that this precept teaches that the acquisition of wealth is unlawful.

Let us observe that the principle here laid down is, that where a man's treasure is there will be his heart. The precept is intended to enforce the pre-eminent importance of having treasure

in heaven. The Hebrew mode of expressing comparison by contrariety is here adopted. The reason adduced shows that this was the meaning of the speaker, for the ground of the precept is laid in reasonable self-love. Treasures are not to be laid up on earth, because they are liable to corruption: they are to be laid up in heaven, because heavenly treasure is all-enduring. The sacrifice here demanded is that of a lower to a higher interest.

It was evidently not the intention of the divine speaker to teach that the rule of poverty is the law of His kingdom. Such a sense can only be got out of the words by disjointing the sentences one from the other, and by sacrificing the spirit of the teaching to the letter. The duty of accumulation of heavenly treasure is asserted. The teacher says nothing as to the mode of effecting it; but the conclusion of the parable of the unjust steward enforces the use of earthly treasure for this purpose: "For I say unto you, make to yourselves friends (ἐκ) out of the mammon of unrighteousness (i. e. earthly riches), that when ye fail they may receive you into everlasting habitations[2]."

[2] The general meaning of the passage is, "So use earthly riches, that when ye die, ye may be received into everlasting habitations." The construction is the same as in the Parable of

On similar principles must be explained the precept about not taking care for the morrow, and the impossibility of serving God and Mammon. With respect to the first of these it should be observed, that the chief difficulty is owing to the translation, and is not inherent in our Lord's teaching. The word *μερίμνα* does not denote merely care, but anxious care. What is forbidden is excessive anxiety, after the manner of the heathen. But the forbidding of excessive anxiety implies the exercise of prudent forethought. Such a precept is neither anti-social nor opposed to the higher forms of civilization.

It may be urged that the feeding of the birds, and the beauty of the lily, both of which are effected without any care on their part, imply that the citizen of the kingdom of heaven is to rely blindly on divine providence for the things of life. But it is absurd to press an illustration beyond its legitimate bounds. The beasts have been created by the Creator without this power of forethought: so have the lilies. They are therefore provided for by providence. But man

the Rich Fool, "This night they shall demand thy soul;" or, as our version has it, "This night shall thy soul be required of thee."

has it as his special endowment: he is therefore bound to exercise it. Beyond its limits God will provide. Faith, not over-anxiety, ought to be the stimulant of his activity.

In Luke vi. 20, 24, 38, we have the following precepts:—"And He lifted up His eyes on His disciples, and said, Blessed are ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of heaven:" "But woe unto you that are rich, for ye have received your consolation:" "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured unto you again."

It seems strange that, from these and similar passages, even an objector should have attempted to fasten on St. Luke the design of teaching that a state of voluntary poverty was the ideal of Christian perfection, or that he has given countenance to some of the doctrines of modern Socialism; yet such is the fact.

I shall not dispute that it was one of the intentions of the New Testament to elevate the condition of holy poverty, and to soothe it by presenting more glorious hopes than this world affords. Considering the pressure which has been exerted by the artificial forms of

society, and the hard lot of multitudes of good men, it was high time that some Gospel of good news should announce that man's life does not consist in the abundance of the things which he possesses, and that he has within him something higher and nobler than any thing which can be affected by externals. But that Christianity has taught that poverty, as such, is a virtue, I deny.

The first of these precepts pronounces a blessing, not on the poor absolutely, but on the poor who had become Christ's disciples: "He lifted up His eyes *on His disciples*, and said, Blessed are *ye* poor." The corresponding passage in St. Matthew is, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." Now, the insinuation that St. Luke modified the words for the purpose of putting a higher honour on voluntary poverty, or that St. Matthew inserted the words "in spirit" for the purpose of avoiding the scandal of teaching the abstract blessedness of poverty, may safely be left to the critics of the higher school of criticism. The obvious fact is, that the blessing is pronounced, not on mere voluntary poverty, but on the poor who were Christ's disciples, who, we are elsewhere informed, had forsaken all to follow Him. The same idea runs through the other three bless-

ings. The four woes correspond to the four blessings, and one is obviously denounced on the character which is the opposite to discipleship to Christ.

The third of these precepts is conclusive as to the real nature of the moral teaching which they involve: "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over shall MEN give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again." Other passages in this same discourse breathe a tone precisely similar. At the same time they are united with considerations derived from the most disinterested benevolence: "If ye give to them from whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners lend to sinners to receive as much again. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and *your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest,* for He is kind to the unthankful and to the evil." Then follows a duty, urged on us from the example of God: "Be ye merciful, for your Father also is merciful." Immediately after, the discharge of it is urged on considerations which terminate in self, "Judge not, and *ye shall not be judged;*

condemn not, and *ye shall not be condemned;* forgive, and *ye shall be forgiven.* Give, and *it shall be given unto you.*" In all these cases, the principle of reasonable self-love is brought in to aid that of pure disinterestedness. "When thou makest a feast, bid," says Jesus Christ, "the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind; for they cannot recompense thee, but *thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.*"

It might have been more logical, perhaps, to have represented all holiness as simple benevolence. But the great Teacher knew that human nature did not move in accordance with logical formularies. Each of these principles has a place in the human heart, and He appealed to them in their due subordination. This being the case, it is absurd to represent Christianity as enforcing voluntary poverty as the height of Christian perfection.

It may be objected that the account of the young ruler proves that the teaching of Jesus Christ denounces the possession of wealth as intrinsically evil. We quote from Mark x. 21: "And Jesus said to him, One thing thou lackest: sell whatever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and take up the cross, and follow Me." After his departure, "Jesus looked on His

disciples, and said, Children, how hard is it for them that have riches to enter into the kingdom of God!" On the disciples expressing their astonishment, our Lord explained that, by the expression "have riches," He meant "trust in them." "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." On the disciples exclaiming with amazement, "Who then can be saved?" our Lord again explains, "With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible." The conclusion is remarkable. The disciples proceed to assert that at least they had left all and followed Him. "What," say they, "shall we have therefore?" In reply, He promises them full compensation in this world and in the world to come.

I observe, in reply to the objection, that there is not one word to imply that the command given to the young man was intended to be a normal law of Christian duty. In answer to his question, What good he should do to inherit eternal life, our Lord quoted the last table of the decalogue, and explained it by the precept, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." The young man then asserted that he had kept all these from his youth, and asked

what yet he lacked. Our Lord tells him if he would be perfect to sell what he had, and give to the poor, and he should have treasure in heaven; "and take up the cross, and follow Me."

Now it is evident that the sum of all moral obligation to our neighbour, "Thou shalt love him as thyself," does not require this sacrifice. It requires us to love him as, and not above, ourselves. The precept to sell all that he had, therefore, must have been given in virtue of our Lord's character as a divine teacher, and founded on the first table of the law, which requires absolute love and obedience to God. But while God has a perfect right to demand this, yet it by no means follows that He makes it our ordinary rule of life. The precept is a special one, flowing out of the particular circumstances of the individual, and intended to test his obedience[3].

The entire precept has in view the young man's supposed moral perfection. If the command of Christ was a divine one, the young man's love of his possessions was greater than his love for God, who demanded the sacrifice. Any other strong passion would have proved an equal hindrance. Our Lord distinctly asserts

[3] See the instance of Zacchæus. No command of surrendering all that he had was given to him.

that He does not repudiate the having riches, but the trusting in them. Even this obstacle is not invincible. It may be so to ordinary human motives, but not to Christian ones. "With God all things are possible."

The conclusion of the paragraph which in St. Matthew includes the parable of the householder, proves that our Lord did not intend to proclaim that voluntary poverty is the ideal of Christian perfection. It contains several appeals to the enlightened self-love of His followers. "Whosoever," says He, "has forsaken father or mother, &c., shall receive *manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come everlasting life.*" The labourers receive different rates of remuneration. Such teaching is no condemnation of that acquisitive principle in man, which forms the foundation of social progress.

In Luke xii. 33, and xiv. 33, we find two very strong precepts:—"Sell what ye have, and give alms; provide for yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens which faileth not, where no thief approacheth, nor moth corrupteth:" "So, likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple."

I answer to this supposed difficulty, that the first of these precepts forms a part of a

body of teaching of which the parable of the rich fool is the central idea. The general scope of the whole passage is far from unfavourable to the acquisition of wealth. Its condemnation is directed against that state of mind which eagerly provides the means of enjoyment for a few years, and leaves the world to come utterly unprovided for. The precepts which follow are not detached utterances, but are illustrations of the teaching of the parable. Comparison by contrast is the principle employed. Sell what ye have, and give alms; provide for yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens which faileth not, where neither thief approacheth, nor moth corrupteth."

Such teaching is essentially popular. It closely resembles an illustration which a heathen moral philosopher[4] uses on a similar subject, taken from the mode of straightening a crooked branch. "When the branch," says he, "inclines too much one way, bend it to the other." Why, then, may not the popular teaching of the Gospels adopt a mode of illustration which was compatible with the scientific teaching of philosophy without being denounced as adverse to civilization?

The context of the second precept in St.

[4] Aristotle.

Luke is one in which our Lord sets forth the supreme self-sacrifice which He demands of His followers. Before the obligations which bind them to Him those of all other human relationships must bow. Yet they remain in full force, except when He demands the sacrifice. The remainder of the discourse consists of explanations, showing that if His claims are so great, the bond of discipleship must not be entered into inconsiderately. Then follows the precept, "So likewise, whosoever he be of you who forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple." It is evident that this is not intended to be a rule of ordinary practice, but an illustration of the extent to which Christ claims the obedience of His disciple when He demands the sacrifice at his hands.

It has been necessary to be minute in the examination of these precepts, because indiscriminate almsgiving has, on the strength of them, been proclaimed a duty.

It will probably be urged that the first disciples of Christ did so interpret the language of their Master, and that they established a community of goods. The words are, "And all that believed were together, and had all things common, and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as

every man had need" (Acts ii. 44, 45). But, although this was the general practice, it was evidently not regarded as a binding rule, for St. Luke makes Peter say to Ananias, "Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power?" Such language is inconsistent with the supposition that the practice originated in an express law of Christ. It is evident, from the Epistle of St. James, that at a later period the extremes of wealth and poverty, with all their attendant evils, existed in the same Church. The Epistles of St. Paul, also, prove that the Jewish Church was very poor, and he therefore urged the Gentile Churches to contribute to its support. It is evident, therefore, that the language is in conformity with the practice of the sacred writers, of describing an extensive practice by a universal statement. It originated, like many other similar impulses, in a burst of feeling, but it claimed no divine sanction, and soon passed away.

While it is true that no precept in the New Testament teaches as a general duty either the renunciation of property, or indiscriminate alms-giving, it is certain that it places in the front rank of virtues, benevolence, mercy, sympathy, brotherly affection among Chris-

tians, and large-hearted liberality. But nowhere can a precept be found which favours the maintenance of poverty in idleness. On the contrary, St. Paul charges those Christians who placed a false construction on the precepts of Christ, to work and eat their own bread, and directly asserts, that if a man would not work, he has no right to eat. This is the teaching of an Apostle who maintained himself by the labours of his own hands, and yet who has alone preserved the saying of his Master, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." The same Apostle says that it is a Christian duty "not to be slothful in business."

It is true that the New Testament contains no precept directing a man to be diligent in the acquisition of wealth. There was no necessity that it should, for this is sufficiently provided for in the tendencies of human nature. When these are strong enough for their purpose, no precepts are given by either Christ or His Apostles to enforce them. There is, however, more than one which directs saving for charitable purposes. To have explained the direct relation of Christian benevolence to the principle of acquisition would not have required a precept, but a treatise on political economy.

It has been necessary carefully to ascertain what is the teaching of the New Testament on this subject, because without laying down a general principle of interpretation it is impossible to answer the objections of unbelievers. These objections are very numerous, and it will be impossible within the limits assigned to me to answer them in detail. All I can do is to show the unsoundness of the principles on which they are erected. In the three following chapters, I shall endeavour to establish principles which will dispose of numerous objections in the works of Mr. F. M. Newman, and other similar writers.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE RELATION OF THE CHURCH TO THE WORLD.

THE determination of this question has a most important bearing on the relation of Christianity to civilization. The word "world" in the New Testament is used to denote the customs, habits, manners, institutions, and modes of thinking of the times, including its religion and morality. As such it may be viewed as nearly equivalent to their civilization. It cannot be denied that to those who take a hasty view of the subject the opposition between it and the teaching of Christianity would seem to be of the strongest character.

But even if we admit that it is as strong as at first sight it appears, the question at once presents itself for solution, In what degree is the modern world involved in this condemnation of the ancient one? It was evidently the intention of our Lord to form a new society, which He designated the kingdom of God. That society has now been in operation for eighteen

centuries. It has to a greater or less degree leavened every thing connected with man, wherever its influences have prevailed. Not only has it affected the whole current of religion and morality, but the wide extent of thought and feeling, and even the various departments of art; in one word, it has influenced the entire course of modern civilization. It follows, therefore, however strong might have been the opposition between Christianity and the world as it then existed, that it is impossible to assume that its denunciations of the ancient world are directly applicable to the modern one, which contains within it the Church and all the influences which have emanated from it.

It is evident that the subject of denunciation of the sacred writers was the world as they then beheld it—the world in opposition to the new-born Church, or kingdom of God. Its religion was false, its moral influences were corrupt, and its entire civilization in different degrees contaminated by them. It follows that if in any conceivable sense of the words the kingdoms and civilization of the world became the kingdoms of God and of Christ, the teaching of the New Testament respecting it would require to be qualified, according to the change of circumstances.

What was true of the old heathen world would require a considerable amount of modification before it could be applied to the modern world, which contains the kingdom of Jesus Christ. This consideration is so obvious, that it is marvellous that it should ever have been overlooked.

I have already observed that the teaching of Christianity is intended directly to bear on man in his individual, and not in his social capacity. Its aim is to act on the individual conscience, and the very foundations of his moral and spiritual being. Still, it is evident that whatever affects man as an individual, cannot help exerting most important social influences. Christianity, therefore, has a most important social bearing. Though its Founder declared the Church to be a kingdom not of this world, yet as existing in it, it could not fail to exert important influences on those which are.

It is certain that at the time of the introduction of Christianity society had fallen into the lowest state of degradation. National life, if not extinct, had become suspended, through the crushing influences of a military monarchy. The general state of society had become so corrupt, that it was only capable of cohering in the worst form of despotism. Liberty was

nearly extinct in the dominant race, and its remnants presented nothing but licentiousness. The only good effected by the political institutions of the empire was the production of material comfort. Higher aims it had none.

The moral corruption of society was so great that it is needless to dwell on it in a specific form. It was never greater. Of this fact the whole remains of ancient literature constitute a distinct proof. The most impure pleasures, instead of hiding themselves in darkness, courted the light of day. Their influence contaminated the highest forms of civilization and ancient art. This civilization was gradually wearing out. Its highest forms of life were dead, and nothing had sprung up to supply their place.

Even in its most palmy days its greatest admirers must own that its defects were neither few nor small. It was a civilization essentially sensuous.

The corruption of the general social life was a symptom of that of the moral life of the individual. The worst forms of modern society could not have tolerated a court like that of the Cæsars, from Tiberius to Nero. The keen enjoyment which was felt in the odious gladiatorial shows is a fair indication of the pro-

fundity of the moral degradation of the times. The plain fact is, that society required to be reconstructed from its basis, if it was not to expire in a mass of utter putrefaction.

While the Gentile world was thus universally corrupt, the Jew also partook in the general degradation of the times, though his character was elevated above the heathen. Its general tendency became apparent in the course of the following century, ending in the dissolution of the Jewish state. Among that race, however, was found the salt which preserved the entire world from corruption, and a reformed synagogue formed the first starting-point of Christ's new spiritual kingdom.

In estimating the relation in which the teaching of the New Testament stands to the "world," and its form of civilization, it is necessary that its actual condition at the period when Christianity originated should be kept steadily in view. We need not therefore feel surprised that its teaching assumes a form of direct antagonism to the spirit of the world as it then existed. As a new life-giving principle in man, it was impossible that it should look with favour on the varied forms of its civilization, so deeply interwoven as they were with the moral corruption which prevailed. To

enable us to form a correct view of the subject, this entire civilization must be contemplated as a whole, and not carefully selected specimens of it.

Throughout the entire New Testament, the Church, or Kingdom of Heaven, stands out in strong contrast with the world. The Church, as a whole, is viewed as the region of holiness; the world as that of sin, and under the dominion of the Evil One. It is important to observe that this view of the Church is taken of it as a whole, not of the separate parts of which it was composed. The contents of the Epistles made this obvious. It is distinctly laid down in the parable of the tares and of the drag net. These and other parables represent that it was only by a slow and gradual process, that the divine morality of the kingdom of God was to leaven the various elements of society.

In conformity with this, while the Epistles recognize the Church in its corporate capacity as the region of holiness, at the same time they make it no less plain, that it had within it elements which contained a considerable admixture of evil. While the society itself was a holy one, the parts of which it consisted were only progressing towards holiness. It

may best be described as an institution intended gradually to diffuse its principles throughout the entire activities of man; and to prepare him for a state where holiness will no longer be imperfect, but actual.

In direct contrast to the idea of the Church is the view taken of the world. As the Church in its collective capacity is the region of holiness, so the world is that of sin. But it must be carefully observed, that the view is taken of it in its totality, not of each of its parts. As a whole, moral corruption was so interwoven with its entire civilization, that it imparted to it the general aspect of evil. As the teaching of the New Testament by no means asserts that all the various elements which meet in the kingdom of God are good, so it is equally far from intending to affirm that every portion of human civilization as it then existed was the contrary. Many things were only rendered evil by their connexion with the prevailing moral corruption.

In accordance with these principles, while the world in its totality is utterly denounced [1], a number of favourable glimpses are taken in the New Testament both of many of its pursuits and its avocations. This is particularly

[1] 1 John ii. 15—17, and v. 19.

the case in the teaching of our Lord. Man—his pursuits, and his avocations, in a word, his general civilization—is the special vehicle employed by Him for the teaching of religious and moral truth. Of this, His parables will bear testimony to the end of time. The same idea occurs through the entire Gospels. The great Teacher had looked with a friendly and a sympathizing eye on human life.

The Epistles bring us into direct contact with the Gentile world, and with the forms of civilization most opposed to the Spirit of holiness. With this state of things, the Christian in Gentile cities was in daily and hourly communication. Its moral corruption had deeply interpenetrated the most ordinary relations of society. Its highest forms of art had been made subservient to the evils of moral degradation. Its corrupt religion spread contamination among the most common social amusements. We may, therefore, expect to find in the teaching of the Apostles, an exhibition of a stronger antagonism between the Church and the world than we do in the Gospels. Such is the fact. St. Paul's spirit at Athens was stirred within him, when he found the city which exhibited the highest form of civilization in the ancient world wholly given

to idolatry. In such a state of things, there was no place in his ardent soul for the contemplation of ideal beauty, as exhibited in the works of art by which he was surrounded. In the language of Renan he lifted up his hammer to break in pieces the innumerable gods and goddesses he beheld. He pronounced them idols, and their worship a profanation, and he was right. Perish both the beauty and the corruption, whether it was exhibited in the forms of poetry, painting, sculpture, architecture, or music. "Dearly beloved," says he, "flee from idolatry."

It is contrary to all sound reasoning to infer that the Apostle would have written and acted precisely as he did, if the objects which he denounced had stood in different moral relations. The Greek conception of beauty, as exhibited in its statuary, might be good in itself, when it no longer ministered to the moral and spiritual degradation with which it had become associated. No feeling of hostility animated the Apostle against the social relationships viewed in themselves. He expressly allows a Christian to be present at a Gentile feast. Only he is to keep himself pure.

So with respect to man's moral constitution. The Gentiles, in the opinion of the Apostle,

possessed an inward light which they ought to have used. "If the Gentiles," says he, "which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves." "The invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse." So far it is clear that he did not consider every thing in civilization, as it existed as impure. It was so only as far as it was associated with the prevailing religious and moral corruption.

With these remarks, we shall be able to estimate the precise bearing of the following precepts of the New Testament. And first, those of our Lord:—

"Ye are the salt of the earth; but if the salt hath lost its savour, it is henceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and trodden under foot of men."

Here it is plain that our Lord recognizes the fact that the kingdom which He was going to erect was to be a renovating and preserving element, which was gradually to be infused into the midst of the old civilizations. "Christians are, or ought to be, the salt of the earth." It was

not to be destroyed, but preserved from corruption. The same truth is taught in several of the parables, in none more distinctly than that of the woman hiding the leaven in the three measures of meal until the whole was leavened. The Church is gradually to diffuse the principles of Christianity throughout human society, until they have thoroughly penetrated all and every portion of its civilization.

Quite consistent with this is the following utterance of the same divine Teacher. "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat. Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

Such was the condition of the kingdom of God, when these words were spoken. There was the little kingdom small as a grain of mustard seed; and the vast external world, and its civilizations, lying in wickedness, and sinking into increasing corruption. The gate of entrance into Christ's kingdom was strait, and the world's wide. Mighty were the attractions of the one compared with those of the other. The one had in possession all earthly power; the other was apparent weakness. "Strive," says our Lord, "to enter

in at the strait gate, for many will seek to enter in, and will not be able." Had not a divine power been manifested, the straitness of the gate would have kept the narrow road empty. This assertion contains an eternal truth; but we must not imagine that it is one which admits of a mechanical application to every circumstance of the Church, however much they may vary. Did our Lord mean to assert that these words were to be applied without modification to every age of His Church —after the outpouring of His Spirit—after the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our God? Such assertions admit only of universal application as far as the circumstances are alike.

In the warning addressed to the disciples occurs the following passage, couched in the most universal terms (Matt. x. 21, 22): "And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child; and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for My name's sake." This forms an accurate description of the positions respectively occupied by the world and the Church during the first three centuries of our era. But it can only be applied in a very

modified form to the state of things at the present day. It is no longer a fact that Christians are hated of all men for Christ's name sake; and we bless God for it. The kingdom of Christ has so far prevailed over the kingdoms of the world, and altered their character.

Quite consistent with this is another utterance of the same Divine speaker: "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and cast out your name as evil for the Son of man's sake." There is not one word to imply that this would be the normal relation in which Christians would stand to every form of human civilization. On the contrary, it implies that it was not to be so always, but when it was, assistance should be equal to the need.

The strongest assertions of our Lord are contained in the Gospel of St. John. "The world," says He, "cannot hate you; but Me it hateth, because I testify of it that the deeds thereof are evil." It is evident that these words are uttered of the world as it then existed, unleavened by the influences of Christianity; in one word, they are spoken of the Jewish and heathen worlds, and the various forms of their civilization. What was good in them was contaminated by the general moral corruption. In

proportion as society is renewed by Christianity, such opposition must necessarily cease.

The statements of the Apostles are stronger than those of the Gospels; but they are all directed against the world as it then was. This is carefully asserted. I must examine a few of them.

Gal. i. 4: "Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from *the present evil world.*" Here the writer expressly states the fact that it was of the *then world*, its habits, customs, and line of thought,—i. e. of its general civilization, that he was speaking. He even implies that it was the object of the Gospel to reconstruct all these things afresh. It is the *present* form of them which is evil.

In Eph. ii. 2 we read, "Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that *now* worketh in the children of disobedience, among whom we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."

It is unquestionable that this passage denounces in the strongest terms the course of the world in which these Christians had lived.

The Apostle specially draws attention to the fact that they had been Gentiles. He describes its whole moral and spiritual atmosphere as corrupt, and contagious like a pestilence. The Christians of the Asiatic Churches had walked according to the course of this corrupt "age." In opposition to it stood the Church of Christ, a holy community, baptized with the Spirit of God. When the "age" of this world had become penetrated with the spirit of the Church it was no longer the same thing. When it ceased to be associated with evil, there was no reason why its civilization should not be enlisted into the service of Jesus Christ.

Let it be observed that, as far as modern Christianized society presents the same aspects as the old heathen civilizations, the same antagonism exists between it and genuine Christianity. In this case the salt has lost its savour. But it is undeniable that Christian influences have largely penetrated modern civilization as a whole. I readily admit that they have been imperfect, and have been only gradually penetrating the mass of humanity. Still, Christianized society, with the Church of God and His Spirit dwelling in the midst of it, is a very different thing from the old pagan civilizations. A Christian may engage

in the life of the one, and claim it as his Master's rightful dominion, while to enter into that of the other would be fraught with nothing but contamination.

The object of Christianity may be briefly stated to be the regeneration of society through that of the individual. Towards this consummation she has ever looked, even in the darkest hour of the world's enmity. Its ultimate results are to cause "the kingdoms of this world to become the kingdoms of God and of His Christ." In this state of things the union between Christianity and civilization will be complete.

Precisely similar are the Apostle's views respecting philosophy. They are set forth at large in his Epistle to the Colossians. I quote a single verse: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy, and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."

The philosophy which he censures is described distinctly, not as philosophy generally, but that of the times. It was not one which involved a hearty seeking for truth, but which was united *with vain deceit*. It is directly affirmed to belong to the existing state of civilization and thought; and the subsequent

parts of the chapter make its general principles sufficiently obvious. A higher civilization and a Christian philosophy are recognized by the Apostle in the Epistles to the Corinthians.

It is needless to offer any particular observations on the strong assertions of St. James and St. John. Their character is the same as those which I have considered. When they wrote, "the whole world was lying in wickedness."

To assert, therefore, from the declarations of the New Testament, that an antagonism exists between its teaching and modern civilization, is to draw an inference which the premisses refuse to warrant. It can only be based on the false principle, that teaching which is specially directed to meet one order of things is directly applicable to one which is entirely different. But, corrupt as the heathen world was, the apostolic teaching does not command the Christian to go out of it, but to live purely in it, "using this world, but not abusing it." Nothing can more plainly set forth the distinction between its moral and spiritual contamination and the civilization which had been abused to minister to it.

It follows, therefore, that the assertion that

there is an antagonism between Christian teaching and the higher form of civilization is founded on a misinterpretation of the teaching of the New Testament.

CHAPTER XIV.

CHRISTIAN TEACHING IN REFERENCE TO OUR SOCIAL DUTIES—ANSWER TO OBJECTIONS.

This subject requires a distinct and careful consideration, not only because it forms a favourite ground of attack on the part of opponents, but also from the singular discretion with which whenever the writers of the New Testament approach the region of politics they deal with such questions. The absence of all attempts at political legislation is one of the most striking characteristics of the New Testament. It distinguishes it from all pretended revelations. It is obvious that a religion which was intended to embrace the entire human race ought to soar in a region above the specialities of politics.

The supposed originators of Christianity must have occupied a very difficult position. The existing forms of society were essentially corrupt. It was therefore necessary that their writings should present a complete abstinence from uttering any thing which would sanction

that corruption. At the same time, if they had made a direct attack on special points of existing political and social corruption, the might of the temporal power would have been aroused against the infant Church, and, humanly speaking, would have destroyed it. It is evident that the right course under the circumstances was to let existing political and social relationships alone; to commence the reform of human nature from within, and to lay down sound principles which would gradually and silently ameliorate the social condition of mankind. This is the course which they have taken, but it is certainly the last which would have occurred to either fanatics, enthusiasts, or impostors.

The absence of precepts directly bearing on man's social condition has been frequently urged as a proof of the imperfection of the moral teaching of the New Testament. It has been asserted by an eminent modern writer that it is inadequate to meet the existing requirements of social progress, and requires to be supplemented by an enlarged system of social morality. I reply that the teaching of the New Testament contains all the great principles of a most enlarged social morality. But before proving this it will be necessary

to clear away several difficulties and objections.

It has been objected that it is impossible for a Christian, who lives up to the standard of the teaching of the New Testament, to devote himself to his social duties with that degree of devotion which is necessary for their successful discharge. It has been urged, if they are to be performed successfully, that it is necessary that a man should enter into them with his heart and soul, as if they were profound realities. Christianity, on the contrary, proclaims the utter transitoriness and worthlessness of all earthly things, and concentrates the Christian's entire attention on things unseen. How, then, can men who have their affections set on things above care for things below? Or, how can those who are firmly persuaded that earthly things will pass away, expend the requisite care on providing for the interests of future generations?

To a difficulty which is purely theoretical a great practical fact is a sufficient answer. It is undeniable that men whose minds have been most deeply leavened with the principles of Christianity have been the very persons who have discharged their social duties with the greatest diligence and fidelity. Such men have attained the highest eminence as poli-

ticians, social reformers, merchants, generals, and admirals.

It may be objected that they have done this despite of their Christianity, and have shown a happy inconsistency in not carrying out its teachings. I reply that while it is true that the teaching of the New Testament emphatically asserts the transitory nature of present things, it by no means asserts that they are unimportant. On the contrary, it declares that the right use of them has a most important bearing on our future interests.

While in a similar manner it declares that earthly things are not a man's own by inherent right, it sets forth that they are committed to us as God's stewards, and that it is our duty to use them most diligently in our Master's service. We are to act in them under the highest sense of responsibility to God. Christ claims our entire life; all its various functions are to be discharged as due to the Lord, and not unto man. In this aspect of its teaching, Christianity has brought to bear on earthly things a sense of responsibility and self-sacrifice compared with which all other motives are weakness.

It follows, therefore, that the grounds taken by the objector, as the reason why a Christian cannot adequately devote himself to the dis-

charge of those duties which society imposes on him, form the strongest motive for their diligent performance. But the whole subject will become plainer if we consider the oft-repeated objection that Christianity does not teach the duty of patriotism.

The objection is so far true, that it teaches something far better, higher, and nobler. It includes every thing which is good in patriotism, and excludes every thing which is evil.

The truth is, that patriotism is far from being a pure virtue which can be pursued at all times and under all circumstances. Far be it from me to deny the nobleness of many of its manifestations; but these are so closely allied to vices of a serious character that it may well be questioned whether it has not produced a greater amount of evil than of good.

Patriotism in its best aspect may be defined as the sacrifice of the selfish principle in man in love to his country or his race. This is its noblest form. I need hardly observe that Christianity contains a more absolute and perfect principle of self-sacrifice in the complete consecration of self to Christ our Lord. As far as the extent of the duty is concerned, the demands of Christianity far exceed the highest requirements of patriotism.

But the principle of patriotism is far from being one which is purely unselfish. It is true that it demands the sacrifice of self to promote the interests of the state; but it is no less true that, in doing this, many of our feelings that terminate in self receive their highest gratification. The patriot feels that the glory and well-being of his country are pre-eminently his own. Even the act of dying for his country is an effort to realize his own honour in that of his country. But self-sacrifice on the battle-field is seldom the result of this feeling alone. It is frequently allied with others of a more impure character, such as hatred and revenge. But the Christian act of self-sacrifice contains more than all which is noble in the highest patriotism free from the danger of its defects.

The superior size of modern states imparts to patriotism a purer aspect than it bore in ancient times. Ancient patriotism was necessarily narrow. The smallness of the number of the citizens imparted to ancient states the character of a joint-stock company, in which the share of the individual was a large one. The dominant class of citizens were the only ones who could be animated by patriotic feelings, because they alone shared in the benefits of the

state. To the numerous slave population this virtue was one of the most oppressive of vices. Christianity, too, has created a state, in the promotion of the well-being of which it expects its disciple to expend his energies. But this state is no narrow corporation, but the Church, which calls to all its privileges the slave and the outcast equally with the free man.

But neither in ancient nor modern times can patriotism claim the rank of an unmixed virtue. It was therefore impossible for it to have received the direct commendation of the New Testament, even in a modified form. To the Greek it meant a state of chronic war which recognized no obligation towards an enemy. To him the outer barbarian world was only fit to be trampled under his heel. With the Roman it meant the subjugation of all other nations to his rule, and the indiscriminate slaughter of his foes. I admit that the act of self-sacrifice never wholly loses its nobleness of character; and this is the origin of the fascination which this virtue has exercised on mankind. But we must never forget that those feelings which led a Roman to devote his life for his country impelled him to trample on the world.

Now, although some of the aspects of

patriotism have been modified in modern times, the evils connected with it are far from being extinct. Who will pretend to justify the deeds which have been perpetrated in its name? If Christianity had pronounced its approbation of it as a virtue, it would have destroyed its claim to be considered as a revelation from God. Yet the temptation on the part of the writers of the New Testament to have pronounced their approbation was great. They would have been backed up by the all-but universal consent of the ancient world.

The teaching of the New Testament has done, in the direction of this virtue, every thing which sound reason can require. It has created a degree of self-sacrifice for the benefit of mankind more pure, more noble, and more powerful than any thing which the patriotism of the ancient or modern world has been able to produce. What in history can equal the completeness of the self-sacrifice of a multitude of Christian Missionaries and philanthropists in their efforts to improve the moral and spiritual condition of mankind? Where, in the whole course of history, can we find any thing equally pure and noble? Christian teaching contains every thing which is good in the spirit of patriotism, and restrains its

evil by the comprehensive precept, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

The assertion which has been often made, that Christian teaching does not enforce the discharge of the social duties, is best met by a simple denial of the fact. I readily admit that it has not prescribed the mode in which they should be performed. It may be readily conceded that it says nothing on many of the subjects which at the present day engage the attention of philanthropists. It is silent on the subjects of the improvement of dwelling-houses, and of drainage, and of sanitary reform, and many other things which the experience of modern times has shown to be highly conducive to the social well-being of mankind. All such questions it has most properly left to be solved by reason aided by experience; but to say that Christian teaching neglects to enforce the discharge of the social duties is simply untrue. It would have been a nearer approach to correctness to have objected that it assigns them an undue importance.

The objection has been presented in another form. It has been urged that Christian teaching does not enforce the duty of resistance to the enormous political evils of the time, and it

has been inferred that it is indifferent to their existence generally.

The objection is founded on an entire misapprehension of the mode in which the teaching of Christianity proposes to act on human nature. Two methods have been propounded for its reformation. The one begins with that which is internal, and by means of the internal acts on that which is external. The other begins with the external circumstances of man, and, by improving them, hopes to affect his internal being. The former is the mode which Christianity has adopted: the latter is that which has been approved of by a large number of those who deny its divine character. To object to Christian teaching, that it does not pursue a course which it could only do if it adopted the latter course, is to assume the point at issue.

I maintain that experience has abundantly proved that the method adopted by Christianity is more effectual than that of modern social reformers. If the social condition of mankind is to be completely ameliorated, it must be done by appealing to the heart and conscience of the individual, not by mere attempted reconstructions of political society. The saying of our Divine Master contains a truth of world-

wide application: "First make clean that which is within, and the outside shall be clean also." Bad institutions are only in a subordinate sense the causes of social corruption.

But, further, the inference because the Christian teachers did not denounce the political evils of the corrupt Roman Empire, that therefore they were indifferent to political and social evil generally, is a conclusion which the premisses will not sustain. On the contrary, the whole of their teaching is one great combat with all kinds of evil, individual, social, and political. Christianity has created a great spiritual power, and by means of it has erected that great social edifice, the Church. Its conceptions have gradually penetrated every region of thought, whether they be scientific, literary, social, or political, and effected in them a mighty revolution. Its teaching has first effectually claimed for man liberty of conscience, and asserted that there is a region of thought which is the exclusive property of God, into which the civil governor has no right to enter. What was it but the ideas introduced by Christianity which first set any limits to the tyranny of the Roman emperors? Where does that liberty exist where the Church of Christ is

not? Who have fought the long fight with the evils which oppress humanity like those who have drunk deepest into the spirit of Christian teaching? The doctrine that it is a divine work to labour to do good, even to the most degraded, has done more to promote social reform than all the labours of those who have tried to effect that work by attempted reconstructions of society.

These and all similar objections are founded on mistaken views of the actual teaching of the New Testament. There have been mistaken enthusiasts in all ages who have acted on the principle that it is the height of Christian perfection to abandon the affairs of the world. This has been pre-eminently the case in periods of great moral and political corruption, when society has seemed to be shaken to its base. But where is the warrant for this in the teaching of the New Testament? Is it not contrary to its entire spirit? "Ye are the salt of the earth," says Jesus Christ, i. e. the great preservative principle of society. It matters little in the result whether this salt loses its savour or places itself in a position where it is impossible for it to exert a salutary influence on the masses. The abandoning of the world and its concerns, under the pretext

of attending to our own personal religion, is the re-appearance in another form of the spirit of selfishness which Christianity denounces.

These and similar results have been brought about by pressing to its extreme logical consequences some one principle of Christian teaching, and by refusing to modify it by others equally important. The entire system of Christian teaching is one thing. Each separate portion of it, taken away from its connexion, something wholly different. Christianity unquestionably teaches that the interests of the life to come are far more important than those of the present. Enthusiasm has deduced from this the conclusion that it is right to abandon this corrupt world and all its concerns. But what if a continuous combat with its evils and its sins is the best means of securing our interests hereafter? It may be objected that the feeling of ownership in the things of this life will make us act with more energy than the duty of acting as the stewards of another. But what if the period of ownership is very short, and a faithful discharge of our stewardship leads to perpetual ownership hereafter?

The object of Christianity is to claim this world for God. Its kingdoms are to become

"the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ." Every Christian, therefore, has a distinct interest in man and in every thing which concerns him. It follows, that every thing which conduces to man's well-being is a Christian duty. The only open question is, How is his well-being to be the most effectually promoted? Christians and their opponents agree that his moral condition requires to be elevated. They disagree as to the means by which it is to be accomplished. Which has pursued the right course can be determined only by an appeal to the facts of history. That appeal history answers in no ambiguous voice.

In what, I ask, is Christianity unfavourable to the progress of civilization? My opponents cannot deny that it has in former ages exerted a mighty civilizing influence. It is an undeniable fact that the whole of our existing civilization has been to a large extent generated by it, and that throughout its entire extent it is deeply and favourably marked with its influences. Let it be shown how it comes to pass that its teaching, which has been by far the mightiest power to effectuate human progress during eighteen centuries, is now becoming defunct in the nineteenth. What are its peculiar problems with which Christianity is

unable to grapple? My opponents will perhaps reply that the great question of the day is the mode of dealing with the mass of poverty by which we are surrounded, or the question of the fair division of profits between capital and labour. I might enumerate a multitude of other important topics with which its teaching does not attempt to deal directly. Among them is the great social evil of slavery. But is it true, because the teaching of the New Testament does not attempt directly to grapple with such questions, that its great principles are not capable of effectually dealing with them? It is true that Christianity has nowhere directly denounced the institution of slavery. A great Christian teacher even sent back a fugitive slave to his master. But it is no less certain that it has destroyed it wherever its influences have extended. It will be found that all the other great questions which agitate the modern world will ultimately be settled by its influences and decided in conformity with the great principles of its teaching.

I am far from wishing to deny the importance of many of these questions to the well-being of man, or to assert that as a moral being he is not greatly affected by the de-

grading character of many of his physical surroundings. Moral and physical degradation mutually react on each other; but while a state of moral corruption is compatible with a high state of civilization, physical degradation is inconsistent with an elevated state of our moral being. If we place a savage in the midst of the most civilized society, he will continue a savage still. I by no means assert that Christianity, even if heartily embraced, at once gets rid of the dark stains of moral evil which are the results of a long period of degradation. But it cannot be denied that many a soul which has been previously sunken to the lowest depths of vice has been elevated by its truths to a high order of virtue. When once embraced as a living principle, it has availed to conquer the most stubborn forms of vice. Deep-engrained evil has never been eradicated by any mere change in a man's outward condition.

The principle of improving man's moral condition by acting on his outward surroundings, is practically the morality of secularism, although it would be unjust to designate all who adhere to it in a modified form as professed secularists. As a system, secularism repudiates every thing which lies beyond the sphere of the tangible and the visible. Nothing is a

more common fallacy than to assume that because there is some truth in a system, therefore it contains the whole truth. I am far from denying that the attempt to improve the outward condition of mankind will exert a beneficial influence on his moral character. But to propound this as the one only efficient means of grappling with human corruption, is to treat with contempt the entire experience of history, which proves that the highest forms of civilization in the ancient world were compatible with the lowest depths of moral corruption. Secularism, if true to its principles, can appeal only to the selfish principle in man. All past experience proves that reasonable self-love is too weak to grapple with the violence of the passions. As secularism asserts that it is impossible to prove the existence of the invisible, the only power which it can bring to bear on man as a moral being is the influence of the present life. That influence has been tried, and has failed to effect the regeneration of mankind. No moral reformation can be effected by any power which is unable to penetrate to the depths of human nature. Bad political institutions help to degrade mankind, but good ones are unable to regenerate him when degraded. To effect this we must deal

with him, not in his social, but his individual character.

Another objection is, that the arts and the higher culture, which are so closely connected with the elevation of mankind, are ignored, if not unfavourably regarded, by Christian teaching.

I answer that the best mode of testing a tree is to examine the nature of the fruit which it produces. Christianity, as a fact, has incorporated all the higher forms of culture, such as poetry, painting, architecture, sculpture, music, with its own life. A Christian form of every one of these exists. No opponent can deny that in every department of art Christianity has created a Christian form of it which is fairly entitled to dispute the pre-eminence with all its forms which are not Christian. Against such facts it is absurd to set up an abstract theory that deep earnestness about the world to come is inconsistent with a devoted pursuit of man's higher civilization.

It has been objected that the whole course of Christian teaching is inconsistent with the successful prosecution of the functions of a merchant and a trader. As this involves considerations of the highest importance, I must consider it in a separate chapter.

CHAPTER XV.

THE TEACHING OF CHRISTIANITY VIEWED IN RELATION TO THE PRINCIPLES OF POLITICAL ECONOMY.

It cannot be denied that there are many strong assertions in the New Testament on the subject of riches. To these I have already endeavoured to assign a definite meaning. The real question is, What is the effect of those teachings taken as a whole? It has been felt by many that they are difficult to reconcile with the truths of political economy.

This science has proved that it is a duty to society that expenditure should be less than income, so as to admit of the accumulation of capital. It also makes it perfectly clear that if society were to expend all its surplus income unproductively, it would not promote the interests of virtue, but of vice. It has also established the fact that promiscuous almsgiving, which former ages thought a highly Christian act, is not only not meritorious, but highly censurable.

It is a question of which it is hardly possible

to overrate the importance, Do these principles in any sense come into collision with the teaching of Christianity ?

I observe, in the first place, that revelation has not been given for the purpose of teaching men science. Those things which man can learn by the use of his scientific intellect form no essential portion of divine revelation, and are only indirectly connected with it, instead of being of its essence. Political economy is a science. We cannot, therefore, expect to find its principles in the Bible. Still I am ready to admit that some portions of their teachings occupy common ground, though they differ wholly as to the point of view from which they are contemplated. It is, therefore, essential that there should be no direct antagonism between them.

Now, with respect to some portions of them, I have already shown that this collision does not exist, and that the popular misconceptions on the point have originated by adopting a system of interpretation which would make hopeless nonsense of any other book. An analysis of what that teaching actually is, and of the principles on which it is based, at once disposes of a multitude of popular errors. Christian teaching does not forbid saving; it does

not command promiscuous almsgiving; it pronounces its commendation on industry; it does not forbid to engage actively and energetically in the duties of life, but it commands us to do so as the stewards of God. In one word, it contains no moral precept which admits of a mechanical application independently of the circumstances of the particular case.

Still it may be felt that although there is no direct antagonism between the teaching of Christianity and philosophy, the general animus of the former is unfavourable to the positions established by the latter. To take an example. Many may feel that the general spirit of benevolence, disinterestedness, and freedom from earthlymindedness required by the Gospel, must act unfavourably on the accumulation of capital, which political economy has shown to be necessary to the progress of civilization. It may also be felt that the solemn warnings on the subject of riches contained in the New Testament are antagonistic to the principles established by this science. I select one of them as a sample of the rest: "They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all

evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness," &c. (1 Tim. vi. 9—11.)

I propose the following considerations for the solution of the difficulty:—First, science and Christianity contemplate these subjects from an essentially different point of view. Science has to do with outward results. The point of view in which revelation contemplates them is wholly inward and spiritual. Further; it is undeniable that there is such a vice as avarice; that it is one to which men are exceedingly liable, and that it is peculiarly hardening to the heart. It is one of the special functions of Christian teaching to struggle against its deadly influence. This gives their particular form to various precepts of this description. In the passage which I have cited, St. Paul is censuring a class of persons in whose conduct gain and godliness were the same thing. In opposition to them he maintains that godliness with contentment is great gain. He then urges freedom from earthlymindedness, on the ground that things merely earthly will perish in the grave. In opposition, therefore,

to being devoured by the vice of avarice, he urges men to be content with food and raiment, because those who are desirous to be rich (*βουλόμενοι πλουτεῖν*) fall into temptation and a snare. The desire impels men into many hurtful lusts of a most morally destructive character. He then says, emphatically, *not that money is the root of all evil, but the love of it*, and that the earnest hankering after it often pierces men through with many sorrows.

It is evident, therefore, that it is not his purpose to utter any condemnation against wealth generally, but to warn against its dangers, especially those which arise from the vice of avarice. Not one word does he utter which implies that wealth has not a right use, or that the diligent acquisition of it may not be a duty. It is the earnest devotion to the acquisition of it for its own sake which he denounces, not the employment of it as the stewards of God. Every one of his assertions are simple facts, and are quite consistent with the truths of political economy.

Secondly, admitting the truth of the primary teachings of political economy, I further reply, that no one principle is adequate to meet the wants of the many-sidedness of human nature.

It is evident that an immense mass of evil exists for which those who suffer from it are not responsible, and with which its principles are wholly inadequate to grapple. Thus multitudes suffer from diseases and misfortunes which no prudent forethought on their part could have averted. An industrious labourer, for example, is killed by an accident, and his death involves his whole family in hopeless poverty. The weak physical constitution of another renders the efforts of the most determined industry unavailing. Men are born diseased, lame, deaf, and blind. No amount of demand in the labour-market will prove of the smallest avail in such cases. It is evident that they can only be met by the aid of the benevolent affections.

I am far from wishing to deny that a considerable portion of the evils which oppress humanity are the result of men's vices and improvidence. These miseries are, in fact, the natural punishments of vice. But even if we concede thus much, it is evident that an immense sphere is left open for the action of that portion of the teachings of Christianity which we are now considering. However much of human misery is caused by vice, a large portion of it originates in causes beyond the control of the individual.

To some of these causes I have already drawn attention. It will be sufficient for my purpose only to mention one more, which may be designated the accident of birth. A man is born into a state of society which is degraded morally and socially. He inhales its atmosphere from his earliest childhood, and, as a result, participates in the general degradation. Here we have a case, if not of total irresponsibility, at any rate of divided responsibility. To this must be added that large number of cases which are clearly the results of accident and of physical evil. It is evident that the remedy of this class of evils lies quite beyond the conditions of the labour-market, and that they form a legitimate sphere for the action of that class of virtues which Christianity labours to create, benevolence, liberality, and the sacrifice of self for the promotion of the good of others. Within their proper spheres, therefore, the great principles taught by Christianity and those of social science may safely work side by side.

But even for those evils which are caused by voluntary vice the hardest political economist will hardly assert that there is not room for the action of compassion, or that it is not a duty to endeavour to rescue such from the ruin into which they have fallen. If this be so, a sphere

of action lies open for the class of virtues to which Christianity has affixed the special seal of her approbation as wide as any Christian can possibly demand.

But further: the benevolent affections in man are weak, compared with his selfish and prudential ones. I admit that the love of acquisition is frequently overborne by the violence of the passions which terminate in self-gratification. But this does not affect the question of the relative strength of the two principles. The principle of self-love is sufficiently strong to be able to dispense with the aid of any external stimulus. This is evident from the fact that accumulations of capital increase rapidly, notwithstanding the strength of those passions which tempt us to extravagance. Now, as Christian teaching contemplates man practically, it would have been useless, not to say pernicious, if it had endeavoured to increase the strength of those principles which are already sufficiently cared for by the present constitution of human nature.

But although Christian teaching does not attempt to impart additional strength to the principle of self-love, it wages an internecine war with that whole class of vices which interfere with its legitimate action. A single instance

will explain my meaning. Perhaps no one vice more interferes with the acquisition of wealth than drunkenness. This Christianity emphatically denounces and declares excluded from the kingdom of God. It takes a precisely similar view with respect to other vices having similar tendencies. Although, therefore, it should be conceded that Christianity nowhere teaches that the acquisition of wealth is a duty, yet it directs the whole strength of its spiritual armour against those vices which, if they obtained the mastery, would render it impossible.

The whole force of these objections lies in the undue assumption that it is the purpose of Christianity to propound a body of ethical doctrine which is abstractedly perfect, instead of taking the facts of human nature as they are and endeavouring to provide a practical remedy for its deficiencies. I repeat, therefore, that it was needless for Christianity to attempt to strengthen that which was already sufficiently strong. It is right, therefore, in directing its attention to those principles which are weak, but whose sphere of action is most important for the purpose of dealing with human misery and corruption.

Still it may be urged, Is not the spirit of be-

nevolence, liberality, and heavenlymindedness, which occupy so high a place in the teaching of Christianity, unfavourable to the accumulation of wealth which science teaches to be the foundation of human progress? is it not a certain fact, that if a merchant or a trader acted on strictly Christian principles his gains must be small, and his accumulations less?

I reply that the strongest advocate of the accumulation of wealth will not deny that it is the duty of the merchant and the tradesman to act on the principles of the strictest honesty. Beyond all question the selfish passions offer strong temptation to their violation. Now it is certain that no acquisition made by dishonesty tends to the good of society or increases the stock of capital at its command for the employment of labour. Although dishonest practices may increase the wealth of individuals, they are in reality simply robbing one portion of society for the benefit of another. Trade, therefore, is beneficial to society only as far as it increases the common stock. Those portions of the teaching of Christianity which denounce wealth as acquired by dishonesty have, therefore, nothing directly or indirectly to do with the subject under consideration.

Still I admit a difficulty may be felt: if a man is benevolent up to the standard of the teaching of Christianity, can he save? Is not the misery and degradation of mankind so great as to compel him to expend all which otherwise would be legitimate savings in works of active benevolence?

First, I observe that while Christianity teaches the highest form of self-denial, it teaches prudence. It is express in teaching the duty of making provision for children and parents. The neglect of this latter duty, under pretence of doing God service, has received one of the strongest condemnations of our Lord. The same principles are applicable to making provisions against accidents and the certain approach of old age. This whole class of duties are either directly taught in the New Testament, or are a matter of the most certain inference from its teaching.

But it is equally clear that such duties do not include those forms of expenditure by which the higher forms of civilization are promoted, such as expensive works of art, furniture, dress, and an immense class of things, the production of which form the support of a considerable portion of mankind. It is no less certain that if expenditure of this kind was cut off, for the

purpose of devoting our incomes to acts of benevolence, those who gain their livelihood by this kind of work would starve. If, therefore, a Christian confines himself to simple necessaries for the purpose of expending all he has on acts of beneficence, the act is to take from one person for the purpose of giving to another.

But the mode of putting the question occasions the whole of the difficulty. I therefore observe,—

Secondly, that if a large portion of mankind acted up to the principles of Christianity, the difficulty would cease. The numbers of those who do so are few, and on them devolves the whole stress of alleviating the miseries by which they are surrounded. The degraded classes and those who neglect the duty constitute the great majority. While this is the case, the onus must press with great weight on the small number of those who are animated by Christian devotedness. In proportion as the area of genuine Christianity increases, both the demand on the means of individuals and the field of labour would diminish. If all men were good and holy the difficulty would disappear.

But observe further: as long as this result is not realized, and things continue in their present state, the ordinary laws of supply and

demand remain in full operation. Men will continue to spend their incomes on the conveniences and the elegancies of life; and the self-denial of the small number of Christian men, as far as it can exert an influence in diminishing the means of the employment of labour, becomes an unappreciable quantity. The fallacy has resulted from supposing one of the conditions of the case to have undergone a change, and forgetting that the other must undergo a similar one. To put the case plainly: it is assumed that certain consequences would result if the great majority of men should become animated by Christian principles. It is forgotten that in this case the demands on benevolent expenditure would proportionately diminish.

But I directly deny that benevolent expenditure, when conducted under the guidance of prudence, is not reproductive to society. In some cases it may not be so, yet still it may be the highest of duties to alleviate distress. But it cannot be denied that the reformation of a thief is reproductive to society, for he is supported by it in idleness, whether he is engaged in plying his calling or expiating his offences in prison. The same is true of every other form of vice. Again: although benevolent

effort may not be immediately reproductive, it may be ultimately so, as, for example, the labours of a missionary society. The civilization which follows in the wake of Christianity is so conducive to the great interests of mankind as fully to entitle the expenditure incurred in the promotion of missions, even in the eyes of the sternest political economist, to be classed as a reproductive expenditure of capital. The same is true of every means employed for the moral amelioration of mankind.

I have already disposed of the question of indiscriminate almsgiving, and shown that it is nowhere taught in the New Testament.

But it has been urged that a successful pursuit of business requires that a man should throw himself heart and soul into it, and that the same is true of every other human calling. The feeling of a deep interest for the things of the world enables a man to deal most successfully with them. It has been objected, therefore, that the elevation above earthly things, which Christian teaching seeks to create, is adverse to the power of dealing with them effectually.

I fully admit that one of the great objects of Christian teaching is to create this elevation of spirit. Christian teaching brings a different power to bear, but the inference that it will

make a man less diligent, I deny. It substitutes for the love of the things themselves the principle of stewardship to God. The principle of duty profoundly impressed on the mind will form an equally powerful incentive to diligence as a deep devotion to the objects themselves.

But while man is the steward and God the Owner, the Master to whom we are responsible is one of the greatest possible liberality. He allows His steward the free use of the possessions with which he is entrusted, as long as he continues in his office, and promises him the most ample reward for a faithful discharge of it. Not only, therefore, does Christian teaching bring to bear the deepest sense of responsibility on the discharge of worldly duties, but it denies that any duties are purely worldly. A Christian merchant, therefore, may be a man free from earthlymindedness; yet if he feels that his calling in life is a trust committed to him by God, he may display equal diligence in the discharge of it under a feeling of responsibility, as if he were animated by an eager love of gain. The same is true of every calling in life. Christianity has substituted a higher motive for a lower one, and instead of diminishing has increased its force.

If these principles are correct, it follows that

the effect of Christian teaching is not to limit the creation of wealth, but to place it on right principles. I have already proved that only the legitimate acquisitions of wealth are beneficial to society. With this no Christian principle interferes. Its great and distinguishing feature is, that man's entire life belongs to God, and that every man's worldly calling is to be engaged in under a deep sense of this responsibility. If, therefore, the acquisition of wealth is one of the means of benefiting mankind, the Christian merchant is under the clear obligation to devote himself to it, and to use it under a sense of responsibility to God.

I observe, therefore, in conclusion that a careful consideration of the entire mass of facts connected with the moral and social condition of mankind makes it evident that the teachings of science are not adequate to grapple with all the wants of humanity. They have their own special bearing on the moral improvement of mankind. They have brought to light a number of truths which would otherwise have been overlooked. But it is an error to propound them as a universal medicine adequate to cure all the various moral and social diseases of man. No one single remedy is adequate to effect this.

I am far from wishing to underrate the importance of the influence which the principles of social and political science, when rightly applied, may be made to exert on the moral reformation of mankind. On the contrary, I freely concede it. But after we have taken the highest estimate of it, it will be undeniable that there will remain a vast amount of moral evil with which it is unable to grapple, and which, if grappled with at all, must be combatted on wholly different principles. Within this sphere there will be found abundant room for the exercise of the great Christian principles of self-sacrifice, elevation above mere temporal considerations, benevolence, mercy, compassion, beneficence, and the entire range of those graces which are pre-eminently Christian. When all these have accomplished all that can be effected by them, there will still remain the necessity of invoking that great spiritual power which is the special revelation of Christianity, "the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord." It follows, therefore, that the alleged contradiction between the principles of Christianity and science are imaginary.

CHAPTER XVI.

JESUS CHRIST NOT ONLY THE GREATEST OF MORAL TEACHERS, BUT THE MIGHTIEST MORAL AND SPIRITUAL POWER WHICH HAS BEEN BROUGHT TO BEAR ON THE HUMAN MIND.

We must now consider that portion of the teaching of the New Testament, which is absolutely unique, and which distinguishes it from every other book before or since; its exhibition of a new moral and spiritual power in the person of the Founder of the Christian Church. Others have investigated the great principles of morality, and taught its duties with more or less success. They have even enforced them as they best were able. But Jesus Christ alone of teachers has conceived the design of creating a new moral power which should be able to penetrate to the depths of human nature, and of placing its centre in His own person.

It is no theory but a fact, that Christianity has acted with a power on mankind which nothing else has been able even to approach. In proof of this, I will adduce the testimony of a writer

who is beyond all suspicion, and whom it is impossible to accuse of partiality, that of Mr. Lecky, in his able work on the "History of European Morals from Augustus to Charlemagne." After having pointed out through several pages, the difference between the moral teaching of philosophy, and that of a religion, and the defects and impotence of the ancient philosophic and religious teaching, and contrasted them with the peculiar might and energy of Christianity, Mr. Lecky writes as follows (vol. ii. p. 8):—

"It was reserved for Christianity to present to the world an ideal character, which through all the changes of eighteen centuries, has inspired the hearts of men with an impassioned love, and has shown itself capable of acting on all ages, nations, temperaments, and conditions; has not only been the highest pattern of virtue, but the highest incentive to its practice, and has exercised so deep an influence, that it may be truly said, that the simple record of three short years of active life, has done more to regenerate and soften mankind, than all the disquisitions of philosophers, and all the exhortations of moralists." I am ready to accept Mr. Lecky's statement as the foundation of my argument.

Christianity, according to this witness, has acted on mankind with a might and a power which no other system has. Few will venture to dispute that the fact is correctly stated. The question is, what is the secret of this power? Is it a power which reason must recognize as an appropriate one to accomplish its object? The investigation will lay bare those principles of the New Testament, the discovery of which Christianity shares with no other system, but claims as exclusively her own. They are of considerable extent, but Mr. Lecky is right, when he asserts that their innermost centre is placed deep in the simple record of three short years of active life. It is a fact which is beyond the power of controversy to dispute, that no record of three years of active life, has produced one millionth portion of the influence which has been effected by that of the three years of the life of Jesus Christ. In this respect Jesus Christ has exerted a power to which history can produce nothing parallel.

To put the matter therefore plainly and distinctly: the most remarkable characteristic of Christianity is, not so much its moral teaching, remarkable as I have shown it to be, as the moral power which it has created for the purpose of enforcing that teaching. Much good

though imperfect teaching previously existed as to what was morally right. But the power with which Christianity has enforced it she shares with neither philosopher, moralist, poet, nor writer of fiction.

The existence of this fact is an all-sufficient answer to the great objection of modern unbelief, that the central figure of the Gospels is the delineation of one who had no historical existence; or if he had any, that the form of it which has exerted this mighty influence on the world, is a creation of the imagination. If that character is in its main features historically true, the unique character of its influence is accounted for on strictly philosophical principles, because it belongs to the supernatural. But if we reject this, and reduce Jesus Christ to the level of great men, no rational account can be given why His influence on mankind has, in Mr. Lecky's words, exceeded that of all philosophers and moralists united. Those who strive to reduce Jesus Christ to the level of an ordinary great man, for the purpose of getting rid of the supernatural, virtually invoke it; for if His influence has exceeded that of all philosophers and moralists united, and He was nothing but an ordinary great man, such a fact cannot belong to the natural, but the super-

natural order of things. But if the character be the invention of fabulists, to use homely language, it is a lie, and this most mighty influence has originated in zero.

But further: if the character be a fictitious one (be it the work of poet, or mythologist, or the spontaneous growth of Christian feeling, simply developing itself), we are still entitled to ask, Whence comes the peculiar power which such a character has exerted? Why, I ask, has this fiction of the Jesus of the Evangelists, exerted a greater influence on the world's history than all the fabulous characters which have ever been invented, taken in combination? A philosophy which refuses to grapple with facts like these, is no true philosophy. Let us inquire whether these questions admit of a rational solution.

I have already pointed out that philosophy was fully aware of the impotence of its teaching to effect the regeneration of mankind. After it had discovered what was right, it felt itself powerless to enforce it on the conscience. The passions possessed a might to which all the motives which it could adduce, were able to offer a most imperfect resistance. Nothing was more desiderated by the philosopher than the discovery of a moral power adequate to meet the

emergencies of the case, but he found none. Jesus Christ saw the evil. He grappled with it. He appealed to the conscience in a manner which is exclusively His own; and, although all evil in His followers is far from conquered, He has done more to elevate human nature from its degradation "than all the disquisitions of philosophers, and all the exhortations of moralists," and it might be added, than all the exertions of politicians. Let us carefully trace the peculiarities of the course which He adopted.

First, our Lord's teaching was based on the creation of a profound conviction in the human spirit. He claimed to be in possession of absolute truth. He uttered those truths Himself, with the fullest certainty that there was a chord in the conscience which would vibrate in conformity with His utterances, and recognize them as true. Truth dwelt within Him as the clearest of illuminations. The force of His utterances lies in the fact, that they do not appeal to truth as merely probable, but in its most absolute form. The conception of uncertainty is invariably wanting in the teaching of Jesus Christ. Its moral and spiritual power is based on its conformity to the eternal realities of things.

It is unnecessary for me to quote the Gospels, to prove that the mode in which our Lord made the absolute appeal to truth the foundation of His moral teaching, is one of the points which distinguish it from all others. Eternal life is the *knowledge* of the only true God, and of Jesus Christ. Throughout the entire pages of the New Testament, *truth and holiness, mental darkness and moral evil,* are only different aspects of the same subject.

Our Lord in His teaching rarely rested the truth of any of His great statements on logical proof. Whenever He uses it, it occupies a subordinate place. His appeals are made direct to man's moral intuitions. The importance of this subject will render it necessary to consider it somewhat in detail.

Jesus Christ never once attempted to give a proof of the being or the attributes of God. He announced them as a fact, of which He had the clearest intuition. He called on the heart and conscience to recognize the truth of His utterances. They did so. He set before men a truth, of which they had before obscure and formless glimmerings, that God was their Father. He presented it to the conscience, and the affections, and it created a profound conviction in the human spirit. The mind awoke to

the perception of this truth as a living reality, the personal bearing of which on itself had been previously dormant. It shone into the soul like a bright light, which at once dissipated the mists of ignorance and darkness. Having produced the conviction, He elaborated its consequences to the moral reason, with a force which is irresistible. If God be a Father, He is entitled to the supremest trust, gratitude, and love. If He is the Creator, His watchful providence regulates all things for His children's good. He did not argue these things, but proclaimed them; and they struck a chord with which something vibrated in man's inmost being. They became profound convictions, and revolutionized the moral and spiritual being of those into whose hearts they penetrated. The moral reason could not help recognizing the force of the appeal.

Similar was His mode of dealing with the great truth of human responsibility. He never once attempted to prove that man is responsible. He proclaimed it as a truth which He knew, and men felt, to be true. The innermost depths of the soul responded to the appeal. In His teaching on this subject, He brought the whole power of religion to bear on the feeling of responsibility existing in the conscience.

He did not argue such subjects, but proclaimed them as things of which He possessed an inherent knowledge, as veritably and positively true. The bright sun at once dissipated the clouds which obscured the clear vision of the conscience. He announced the great truth, and the reason and the heart at once grasped it as a profound reality. "Why," says He, "do ye not of yourselves judge that which is right?"

In the same manner He announced the great truth of man's immortality. He never adduced a formal proof of it. He assumes it. Once only, in reply to a direct objection, He adduced a proof of it from the stand-point of His opponents. The feeling of responsibility which dwells in the depths of the conscience, bore witness to the truth of His proclamation. With Him it was no creation of the fancy, or cold dogma of the understanding, but a veritable fact. The light entered, and the conviction was kindled.

One great fact underlies our Lord's teaching. To every truth which He announced, there is something internal in the depths of the reason and the heart, which corresponds to it. All that was necessary was to present it with the fulness of the light which dwelt within Him,

and the conviction became a reality in the soul. There is a God—He is the Creator and the Father of mankind. He is man's Lord. Worship, adoration, self-sacrifice, obedience, love, are His due. He is the moral Governor of those whom He has created. He will therefore, hereafter, render to every man according to his deeds.

An illustration of the mode in which Jesus Christ and the philosophers respectively used the future state as a moral power, will place this in a clear light. To the philosophers it was at best a probability only. Jesus Christ knew its certainty as a truth of God. The philosophers argued that either man was immortal, or he perished at death. If the latter was the case, death was only a perpetual sleep, in which the sleeper could be conscious of nothing either good or bad. But if the former, then the good man would go to the gods. One feels at once, that such a mode of teaching was devoid of all moral and spiritual power. What passions could it restrain? How could it produce a deep sense of responsibility? The utmost that it could effect was to produce a cold assent in the understanding, that it might be more prudent to be virtuous than vicious. In striking contrast is the moral power of this

truth in the hands of Jesus Christ. "Fear ye not them who kill the body, and afterwards have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear Him who after He hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear Him." Christ concentrated responsibility in a living person, the Father Almighty, the Holy One, man's moral Governor and Judge. To these considerations the sense of sin in man, to which the teaching of Christianity appeals, adds a tremendous potency. God, to whom man is responsible, is not only a present witness of every action, but of every thought, and penetrates the innermost recesses of the soul.

Thus Jesus Christ brought the whole force of the religious principle in man to bear on his moral and spiritual character, and converted it into a means of awakening him to the realities of his condition. It is impossible that such teaching, if accepted as a reality, could fail to act as a most powerful sanction. We have here a moral power which the philosopher could not find, viz. truth accepted as truth by the inward spirit of man. In this the New Testament asserts that a sanctifying power exists. "Sanctify them through Thy truth. Thy word is truth."

It is evident that such teaching can only be inoperative, by the refusal of the mind to regard it as a reality. The truths themselves, if fully realized as true, must dominate over the human spirit, and ultimately dispel all opposing influences.

The teaching of Jesus Christ not only brings to bear such forces as these on our moral being, which may be briefly described as the entire power of the religious principle, but He has presented Himself to the human spirit as the one great centre of all moral and spiritual power. This is His great discovery, and the essence of His spiritual power.

But we must not only consider the peculiarity of the great truths enunciated by our Lord, but His entire personal character. The person of our Lord is not only the highest of human examples, but it constitutes *a power*. It is *the power of Christianity*. He performs in the moral world the same functions which the sun does in the natural. All the physical force in the world is the result of the sun's agency. In a similar way the person of Jesus Christ is the sun of the spiritual world, the fountain from which all its great *forces* flow. I have already proved that it is the uniform aspect of New Testament teaching,

to centre all spiritual force in the person of Christ.

Now, whether this claim be right or wrong, it is one which is peculiar to Jesus Christ. No other man who has ever lived, either thought of himself, or was imagined by his followers to be *the centre of all moral and spiritual power*. But what is more remarkable, the power has not proved an idle theory, but an actual fact. Witness, all ye other teachers of mankind, Socrates, Sakya Muni, Confucius, Mahomet, or other unknown founders of systems, are not your claims, and the ideas entertained of them by your followers, essentially inferior to those of Jesus Christ, either which He made Himself, or His followers have claimed for Him?

In what then, does this singular and unique power consist? There is but a single answer, the superhuman glories of the divine character of Jesus Christ, exhibited in Him as a living person.

In this character there is something which appeals to every thing in human nature. It possesses a divine attractiveness. It addresses itself to the holy, and leads them to a higher degree of elevation. It strikes a chord in the hearts of the most degraded of our race. To

him who is a prey to moral and spiritual corruption, He presents Himself as boundless compassion, seeking his recovery to the family of God. To the sufferer He exhibits Himself with a tender sympathy, as one who knows from experience what suffering means. To him who is struggling with difficulties, or tried by temptations, He appears as one earnestly desirous of kindling into a flame the smallest spark of genuine faith. Christ unites in Himself perfect holiness, untiring sympathy, unquenchable love, exalted greatness, the perfection of humility, tender friendship, mildness, meekness, untiring zeal, and a sacrifice of self, which may be called absolute. The whole life of our Lord is an exhibition of a divine attractiveness, exactly fitted to every want of the soul of man.

But there is one special act of Jesus Christ, in which is concentrated the whole of His attractive power, His death, crowning His self-sacrificing life. The act of freely giving His life for man has created a spiritual power mighty to sway the human heart, to the power of which no other known motive has approached. Let it be observed, that this act is one which must not be viewed as a detached one by itself, but as inseparably united with all the other glories of

His character. Who shall describe the moral and spiritual glories which shone forth in the dying Christ? Human language is unable adequately to portray its overwhelming power. Even His own utterance, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends;" even when united with that of St. Paul, "God commendeth His love towards us, in that while we were yet enemies, Christ died for us; and "that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live to themselves, but to Him that died for them and rose again," but imperfectly shadow forth the great reality beneath. It is a simple fact, that no power which has ever existed in the spiritual and moral worlds has swayed the souls of both the holy and the degraded with a might comparable to this. The perfection of this life, culminating in this act of self-sacrifice, has made the holy bow before Him as Lord, and the obdurate melt at His presence.

What are the facts? Millions of sinners of every form and even of the deepest die, have heard His call, and returned to their Father's home. Millions of the holiest men have bowed before Him, and proclaimed Him absolutely worthy to fill the throne of their hearts? Millions of struggling men have found in Him a

power which they have found in none other beside Him. Millions of suffering men have found in Him a moral force which no other character, nay, which no mere form of abstract truth, has been able to impart. They have found in Him rest, submission, even exultation, have become more than conquerors through Him. Every form of sin, whether it be that which emanates from man's lower nature as an animal, or which belongs to his higher nature, has been moved at His presence. That which St. Paul asserted to have happened in the Corinthian Church, has happened through the power of that Name which is above every name, during every subsequent year of the more than eighteen long centuries of the Church's history; men who had been addicted and enslaved to vice, of every dye and every hue, have renounced them all, and have been washed and sanctified in the name of our Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

Christ then, the entire Christ, in His life, in His death, and in His resurrection, is the great moral power of Christianity. It is centred in a living Person, not in a dead formula, or a magical incantation.

How is this power exerted? Jesus Christ presents Himself in all His divine attractiveness

before the soul of man. The spectacle, when steadily gazed on by the inward eye of the mind, generates believing faith. There is something in man's inner being which kindles at the glorious vision? It says to the inmost spirit, Sinner, wilt thou continue a bond-slave to these sins, from the misery and degradation of which I died to redeem thee. The response has been made by a great multitude which no man can number. "We have washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

This mode of action is not only unique but suitable. Man consists of reason, affections, passions; he has an intellect, and a heart. Something must be found to satisfy his whole nature, if holiness is to dominate in every part of it. A dogma cannot. But a man in whom dogmas can live, and perfection reign, is the outward reality which corresponds to the inward verities of our being. A living being, not an idol, is the only fit inhabitant of the temple of the human heart.

Jesus Christ then constitutes Christianity; He is its life and centre, the power which imparts vitality to its teaching. Human literature contains no idea like it. No other teacher has ventured to assume the place which the Christian Scriptures have assigned to Jesus

Christ. He has proved mightier than all the dogmas of philosophers, and the teachings of moralists. It is easy to propound theories for the regeneration of mankind, and assert that they will constitute the Gospel of the future. These we have in abundance, from the morality of utilitarianism to that of communism and atheism. Some of these have attempted the regeneration of mankind, and failed. Others resemble the speculative republics of the ancient philosophers, which refuse to appear in the form of facts. The one kindles no enthusiasm, the other an enthusiasm which society speedily crushes. Liberty, equality and fraternity are glorious names, but the little of them which actually exist is due to Christian teaching. Some of their modern advocates are striving to erect them on a basis independent both of Christianity and religion. But the foundation refuses to support the weight. They can only be erected on the basis of our relationship to a common God, and not in virtue of our descent from a common brute.

The experience of the world has now grown large. The mode of elevating mankind has been most earnestly debated. Philosophers have reasoned, moralists have taught, principles of the soundest prudence have been

propounded, the beauty of virtue has been set forth in the most alluring language, but all these have been derived of a quickening power. Jesus Christ has taken a course different, and His success has been vastly greater than all united. His method has been one which although the profoundest philosophy never thought of, now that it has been propounded by Him, it cannot help stamping with its approbation. The objection of the earliest unbelievers that Christian teaching was foolishness, can hardly be maintained by any in the nineteenth century. Philosophy cannot help acknowledging, that if man is to be rescued from his degradation, the means most mighty to induce him to return to his Father's house is the exhibition of perfect holiness in unison with boundless love in a living person.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE IMPORTANCE OF FAITH AS A MORAL PRINCIPLE IN THE TEACHING OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

While Christ is Christianity, its centre and its life, it is important to consider the mode in which the various moral and spiritual powers summoned into existence by it act on man. The New Testament designates these by a comprehensive term, *Faith*. This principle constitutes the great lever with which Christianity acts on the moral and spiritual world.

So constant is the reference to faith as its great moral and spiritual power, that it seems hardly to require proof. A few references will therefore be sufficient. We observe that throughout the Gospels our Lord sets forth its importance by usually demanding faith as the condition of his performing his miraculous cures. "Have faith," says He, "in God." Its power He describes as sufficient to remove mountains. In St. John's Gospel its

recognition as a great moral and spiritual power is complete. Eternal life is there set forth, not only as a reward of Christ's faithful follower hereafter, but as his possession to be acquired now. *Faith* is asserted to be the means by which it is generated in the soul. "He that *seeth the Son and believeth on Him* hath everlasting life." *He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me,* hath everlasting life, and shall never come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life."

Equally distinct is the testimony of the other writings of the New Testament as to the importance of faith as a spiritual power. St. John says, "This is the victory which overcomes the world, *even our faith.*" St. Paul designates Christians as those who have received *the spirit of faith.* He declares that *faith* is the source from which all the Christian virtues spring. It is the instrument which unites the Christian to Christ his Lord. "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by *faith.*" It is one of the three virtues which will never fail. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews declares "that without *faith* it is impossible to please God; for he that cometh to God *must believe that He is, and is a rewarder*

of them who diligently seek Him." To the power of the *same principle* he also ascribes every great act which was performed by the Old Testament saints. But to quote all the testimonies to its importance would render it necessary for me to transcribe no inconsiderable portion of the New Testament itself.

This subject has been greatly perplexed by the view which has been frequently propounded, and I believe is very extensively held, that the faith spoken of in the New Testament is a term coextensive with belief in testimony. I am quite ready to admit that belief in testimony, especially in that of God, is very frequently designated by the term faith in the New Testament. But while it includes this, it also embraces a far more extensive range of subjects. Equally pernicious is the wide-spread idea that there is an opposition between faith and knowledge, leading as it does to the belief that faith and reason are opposed to each other. As these points are of the highest importance, I must give them a brief consideration.

In St. John's writings faith and knowledge are only two names for one and the same thing, contemplated from different points of view; the one word is used convertibly for the other, whenever he is speaking of the higher

forms of faith. Our Lord in His last prayer distinctly states, "This is life eternal, *to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.*" In the passages to which I have just referred, eternal life is declared to be the result of *faith* in our Lord's divine person. It follows therefore that faith and the knowledge of God and Christ are the same thing, only varying in the point of view from which they are contemplated. Faith in fact is a conviction respecting unseen things, i. e. things which cannot be discovered by the bodily senses, quite irrespective of the mode in which it is produced. The opposition in Scripture is not between *faith* and *knowledge*, but between *faith* and *sight*. "We walk," says St. Paul, "by *faith*, not by *sight*." Throughout St. John's Gospel our Lord describes His teaching by the words "*light and truth*," and the whole state of mind opposed to Him as one of *ignorance and darkness*. The one is the abode of *holiness*, the other of *moral evil*. Each of these embraces the entire regions of *faith* and *unbelief* respectively. In the same manner holiness is described as the result of the reception of truth. "Ye shall *know the truth*, and *the* truth shall make you free." "Jesus Christ gives to them *who receive Him* power to become the sons of God, even *to*

them that believe on His name. Here believing on and receiving Him are the same act, and are directly related to Him as *light, truth,* and *knowledge.*

The testimony of the first Epistle of St. John on this point is equally decisive. Throughout it our Lord is proclaimed to be the *manifestation of life eternal.* In it the word *faith* is seldom used; but the phenomena which in the other sacred writings are referred to *faith* are designated by the words *knowledge* and *to know.* A few quotations will suffice: "God is *light,* and in Him is no *darkness* at all. If we walk in *the light* as He is in *the light,* we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin." This is elsewhere described as the result of *faith.* "We *know* that *we know* Him," i. e. that we believe in Him: "he that loves his brother abides *in light,*" "he that hates his brother is in *darkness, darkness* has blinded his eyes." Christians have an unction from the Holy One, and *know* all things. We *have known* and *believed* the love that God hath to us, *we know* that the Son of God is come, and hath given us *an understanding,* that we *may know* Him that is *true,* and we are in Him *that is true,* even in His Son Jesus

Christ. This is the true God and eternal life." The whole of the things spoken of as knowledge throughout this Epistle are in the other writings of the New Testament directly identified with faith. This identification is directly made by St. John himself in the fifth chapter in the following expressions: "Whosoever *believeth* that Jesus is the Christ is born of God," "This is the victory which overcometh the world, *our faith.*" "He *that believeth on the Son of God* hath the witness in himself." "I have written unto you *that believe on the name of the Son* of God, that ye may *know* that ye have eternal life, and that *ye may believe* on the name of the Son of God."

It is evident that the faith of the New Testament involves a great deal more than mere assent on testimony. A conviction erected on this foundation is an act of faith. But the act of believing on and embracing the glories of Christ's divine person involves not only an assent on testimony, but an appeal to the inmost recesses of our moral and spiritual being; and in this form it receives the designation of knowledge. The person of Christ makes a direct appeal to our deepest moral and spiritual intuitions; and as such, to our highest reason. "*We beheld,*" says St. John, "*His*

glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Similar is the testimony of St. Paul: "We all with open (i. e. unveiled) face, *beholding as in a glass* (by means of a mirror) *the glory of the Lord*, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." Both passages describe the effects and results of faith.

The writings of St. Paul constantly identify faith and knowledge, as different aspects of the same subject. "*We know*," says he, "that all things work together for good to them that love God." Such knowledge is evidently a high act of faith. "Christians are enriched by Him *in all knowledge*; even as *the testimony of God* is confirmed in you." Here knowledge and the testimony of God are identified. In 1 Cor. i., in opposition to different kinds of heathen *wisdom*, Christ is pronounced to be "*the wisdom of God*." In the following chapter this *wisdom* is directly identified with the *great subjects of faith*. Again, "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath *shined in our hearts*, to give the *light of the knowledge* of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." "We having received the same *spirit of faith*, *knowing* that He who raised up the Lord Jesus

will raise us up also by Jesus." This knowledge is obviously equivalent to a firm belief. One passage more will be sufficient: "And be found in Him, not having my own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is *by faith of Jesus Christ*, the righteousness which is of God by faith, that *I might know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings.*"

I conclude, therefore, that the great moral and spiritual power of the New Testament is one and the same; and that although all faith may not be knowledge, yet all knowledge involves an act of faith, and that the one term is frequently used for the other.

Faith is propounded by Christianity as the one effectual remedy for the moral and spiritual diseases of man. Its teachers would say to every man, as the necessary condition of his elevation; believe in truth, be persuaded of its reality; increase in faith; be strengthened in your inner man by Christ's dwelling in your heart by faith. To the degraded their teaching is, Believe, and you shall be rescued from your degradation. To the man destitute of moral self-control, Contemplate the truths which are set before you, until they produce in you deep conviction; and you will acquire the spiritual power which will enable you to

grapple with temptation. To the man ready to sink under suffering, Contemplate Jesus Christ, believe in things to come; and a divine strength will be imparted to you. To the man earnestly desiring to attain to higher degrees of holiness, Grow in faith, and you will increase in every Christian virtue. In one word, the spiritual medicine for the unholy, and the power of spiritual life to the holy is faith in God, faith in His promises, faith in Christ, faith in truth.

It should be observed that while the faith of the New Testament is especially an act of belief in God and Christ, it embraces every thing in which we are capable of exercising a profound conviction. Those original convictions, through which we believe in God's existence and moral attributes, are expressly designated acts of faith. But these are also acts of our highest reason. The invisible things of God, according to St. Paul, are discovered by the things which are made, even His eternal power and Godhead. As I have observed, the act of faith in Christ combines belief on rational testimony and a high exertion of our moral and spiritual intuitions. Our belief in a future state rests on a variety of evidence, but receives its full confirmation by the testimony of one who cannot help knowing whether it be a reality

or a fiction. Such a belief in testimony is one pre-eminently rational. Our belief in our responsibility rests on the rational convictions of our conscience. On all these points we are capable of deep convictions, and all involve acts of faith.

The subject has been much darkened by the mistakes alike of both believers and unbelievers. The latter frequently describe the faith of the New Testament as coincident with the absence of rational conviction. To this they have been tempted by the folly of no inconsiderable number of Christians, who have done their best to set a deep gulf between faith and reason, by representing them as terms mutually opposed to each other. The result is that multitudes have run off with the idea that acts of faith are devoid of a rational foundation, and that the smaller the evidence is the greater is the faith shown in accepting it.

To the objections of unbelievers I simply reply, that these views are fictions unsustained by a particle of evidence. Where in the New Testament is faith thus represented? Nowhere does it demand assent on any thing, but on rational conviction. It is not the characteristic of faith to believe because the evidence is small, but to accept at its proper value all evidence

which is real. Unbelievers exert faith whenever they yield assent to a truth which is not the direct subject of their senses. Nor does a man cease to believe a thing, because he accepts it on the highest form of rational conviction.

But the assertions of Christians that an opposition of some kind exists between faith and reason have opened the way for the attacks of unbelievers. If such were the case, a rational defence of Christianity would be impossible, and faith and credulity would be only different names for the same thing. There are two sources of this error. First, the view that faith and belief in testimony are absolutely identical. Secondly, the fact that there are truths discovered by revelation which transcend the powers of reason fully to grapple with. Those who have inferred from the latter that an antagonism exists between reason and faith, have forgotten that every truth discoverable by reason runs up into subjects which the human mind cannot fathom.

One aspect of faith, as it is exhibited in the New Testament, involves an act of trust; Christianity reveals a living, personal God. Trust in Him, His word, attributes, and promises, is not only a high duty which man owes to God, but one which is highly rational. But

while faith involves trust, it is clear that faith covers a wider area than either trust, acquiescence, or acceptance of truth on authority. The passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews, which I have already cited, proves this. "He that comes to God must believe *that He is, and is a rewarder of them who diligently seek Him.*" It requires no argument to show that we must first believe in the divine existence before it is possible to exert trust in God, or to believe on His authority. On the contrary, the writer distinctly describes as acts of faith those rational convictions through which we arrive at the knowledge of the being and attributes of God. At the same time it is an act of our reason. Without this the sacred writer pronounces all other acts of faith impossible.

It follows, therefore, that the faith of the New Testament is a living conviction of truth as true. I am speaking of truths not discoverable by the senses. All that is necessary is, that the conviction should be based on sufficient grounds. When such a conviction can be created, it becomes a sanctifying principle in the soul.

If a degraded man is to be elevated to a condition of holiness, it is evident that it can only be effected by introducing a new set of ideas

and convictions into his mind. As long as they continue the same he has no chance but to go on in his worldly courses. What he requires is to have a fresh life generated in him. These new convictions become moral and spiritual forces, which, in proportion as they are strong, work counter to the degraded tendencies of his former life. Thus if we wish to rescue a drunkard from his drunkenness, the way of effecting it is by producing in him a conviction of the evil of the vice, and the happy results of temperance. The same is true of every aspect of moral evil.

Christianity, in applying this principle to the moral and spiritual world, has adopted one which is as wide as human nature. It is a fact that a conviction of some kind lies at the foundation of all the energies of life, and that the more profound the conviction is the more powerful are those energies evoked. So far is it from being true, that the principle of faith is not founded on reason, that without it all human activity would be impossible. A faith of some kind is the foundation of every action, and without it the world becomes stagnant, and all progress impossible. The most successful men who have acted on their fellows with the deepest energy, are those who have

been animated by the profoundest convictions. What is it, I ask, which calls into active play the energies of the merchant, or the man of business? Unquestionably, a faith or conviction of some kind; it may be a very worldly one; but still it is a conviction. What induces a merchant to send out a cargo of goods to a foreign country? A faith or conviction founded on the best evidence within his reach, that they will sell and produce a profit. If we were to deprive our merchants of this conviction, the activities of trade would cease. The philosopher, too, is impelled in his search after truth by an act of faith. He believes that at least some truths are attainable and desirable. Deprive him of this conviction, and he would cease to investigate and inquire. A firm faith of a soldier in his general, in his resources, or in himself, is the foundation of victory. The absence of this converts an army into a rabble. Faith also is of the essence of courage. A man to be courageous must at least believe in himself. Nor is it less indispensable to the statesman. Every successful one has had strong convictions about something. Even those whose action has been most pernicious have had a firm belief in the mercenary character of human nature. The inquiry might be prosecuted

through every department of life with a similar result. Even the unbeliever who turns propagandist believes in his unbelief. If we weaken our convictions, all our energies become paralyzed. If we subvert them they are destroyed.

It may be asked, How comes it to pass, if faith or conviction is the foundation of all human action, that the philosophers who preceded the Advent overlooked it as a power which could be employed for the moral and spiritual regeneration of mankind? The answer is obvious. Philosophy failed to create moral or spiritual convictions. The precondition of philosophy was the questioning of the right of existing beliefs to acceptance. She was founded on scepticism, and this led her to call into question the fundamental principles of man's moral nature. She was mighty in demolition, but weak in reconstruction. Few of her positive conclusions rose above the regions of probability, hence they were incapable of penetrating to the depths of our moral and spiritual being. All that a low degree of probability can appeal to is the principle of utilitarianism.

If, then, conviction or faith is the foundation of all the activities of man, it is evident that Christianity is philosophically correct in in-

voking it as the great power in the work of his moral and spiritual regeneration. The only question is, Is it possible to create convictions of sufficient power as to be capable of acting on the depths of our moral being, and of outweighing the force of the passions which impel us to evil? The answer must be returned in the affirmative; for it is a simple fact that Christianity has elicited a number of mighty forces in the moral and spiritual worlds. This is a fact which is palpable on the pages of history.

But not only is the principle philosophically correct, it is the only one which affords any prospect of success. I have already shown that habituation is, from its very nature, powerless to struggle against a state of moral and spiritual corruption, whether it be of mankind or of the individual.

But, while the principle of habituation is powerless for the purpose of grappling with the corruption of the masses of mankind—a truth of which the ancient philosophers were fully conscious — yet in its due place and proper subordination it is a great moral and spiritual power. Although Christian teaching assigns the all-important place to faith, as the great sanctifying principle of man, it has by

no means neglected to use the other principle. When holiness, even in an imperfect form, has once been introduced into the mind, habituation constitutes a most important power to aid in its development and growth. If a holy society could be once instituted, this principle would become a mighty influence for the diffusion of holiness throughout its entire moral and spiritual atmosphere.

Christianity, in her efforts to act mightily on the mind of man, has by no means overlooked this influence. One of her distinctive purposes is to create a new community, the Church, or Kingdom of God. Her first announcement was, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." The office of the Church is to be the educator of man in holiness. It is also the divinely-constituted instrument for the purpose of assailing human wickedness and corruption. It is intended to be the region in which we may breathe a holy, spiritual atmosphere. It is intended to embrace within its limits all those in whom the principle of faith has operated. By the institution of the Church, it is the intention of Christianity to exert all the moral and spiritual influences for good which the principle of habituation is capable of exerting in man.

It will be seen that I cannot, within my present limits, enter on the examination of the place which the Church holds in the teaching of Christianity as a moral and spiritual power. The subject is a very large one, and would require a considerable space to be devoted to its consideration. Still, it would be an obvious defect if I were to avoid alluding to it, and pointing out the place which it occupies in the Christian system. One of its chief functions is, that it forms the instrument through which Christianity brings to bear on human nature the great principle of habituation as a power to aid in the generation of holiness.

The inference is inevitable. This system of teaching which we have been considering, unique as it is, and at the same time philosophically correct, cannot have originated in any of those modes which have been propounded by the opponents of Christianity as the only alternatives to its historical truth.

Such are the great outlines of the moral teaching of Christianity. A clear statement of them is sufficient to prove that the various theories of modern unbelief are utterly inadequate to account for its origin.

I will give a brief *resumé* of the argument. Christian moral teaching embraces every thing which is good in ancient philosophy. The philosophers confessed that, in certain particulars, their teaching was defective. These very defects Christianity has supplied. Those portions of it which latter times have pronounced to be defective the teaching of the New Testament has supplemented. It also contains many points of special teaching unknown to philosophy. Since these have been discovered by Christianity, they have received the approbation of enlightened reason. The very subjects which philosophy abandoned in despair she has grappled with successfully.

Viewed on the positive side, the teaching of Christianity presents us with the ideal of morality in the person of Jesus Christ. An overwhelming majority of thinkers have pronounced this delineation to be perfection. It is an unquestionable fact, that it constitutes the greatest moral force which has ever been brought to bear on man.

Its distinctive teaching is characterized by its many-sidedness and breadth. It is free from every mark of one-sidedness or narrowness. It appeals to every principle in human nature that is capable of being enlisted in the

service of holiness in its proper place and due subordination. Its moral law is of such a wide extent that all possible duties are embraced in it. While its teaching originated in the bosom of the most intolerant of races, its principles of toleration are such that philosophy may envy them.

The duty of self-sacrifice, as taught by Christianity, covers the entire range of social and political morality. There is no duty which man can owe to man which it does not embrace and command, whether it be individual, social, or political. It is adequate to the wants of man's entire condition. Within its range, Christian teaching is in strict agreement with the discoveries of social and political science; and, in addition, it contains principles adequate to deal with difficulties with which science is unable to grapple, and that lie beyond its limits.

Its special achievement is, that it has brought to bear on the mind of man a mighty moral force, compared with which all those known to philosophers and moralists were weakness. Such a force the philosophers desired to find, but they were unable to discover. Now that it has been brought to light by Christianity, philosophy admits that

it is one in accordance with our highest reason.

The moral force which Christianity professes to have discovered is no idle theory, but one which has acted with a tremendous potency. It has impressed itself on every form of civilization; it has lifted the degraded from their degradation, and has elevated the holy. The influence which it has exerted has been entirely beneficent. Reason sets the seal of its approbation to the mode of its operation; it is one which is equally rational and powerful.

Such a system of moral teaching exists in the New Testament. The theories of its origin which the opponents of Christianity propound as the only alternative to its historical truth utterly fail to give a rational account of it. If no known human causes will satisfy rational inquiry, the only alternative is, that its origin must be superhuman. The theory of a supernatural origin will account for the existence of the moral teaching of the New Testament. No other will satisfy the conditions of the case.

It follows, therefore, that the saying of our Lord is true: "If any man will do My Father's will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it

be of God, or whether I speak of Myself." And that of His Apostle: "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." Such an assertion can be made of no other teacher.

Ma. 1882

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